THE

LAST OF THE LAIRDS:

OR,

THE LIFE AND OPINIONS

OF

MALACHI MAILINGS, ESQ.

OF AULDBIGGINGS.

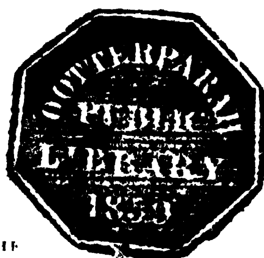
BY THE AUTHOR OF

ANNALS OF THE PARISH, THE ENTAIL, ETC.

> "What's the Laird doing, Jock?"
> "Doing! what should he be doing! but sitting on his ain louping-on stane and glowring frae him?"
>
> *Sage Sayings of Jock the Laird's Man.*

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THE

LAST OF THE LAIRDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE Mailings have long occupied a distinguished place in the laws and annals of Scotland. That they were of Celtic origin many learned antiquaries shrewdly suspect, nor are we disposed to controvert the opinion; although it must be allowed they have never been without a taint of Saxon blood in their veins, being from time immemorial regarded as of intimate propinquity with the Pedigrees, whose eminent merits and great actions are so worthily celebrated in the chronicles of venerable virginity.

In what part of the country they first struck their inextricable roots would now be hard to tell; but the forefathers of Malachi had, from unrecorded epochs, flourished in the barony of Killochen, a fertile and pleasant tract of Renfrewshire, and it is meet that we should describe their habitation.

The mansion-house of Auldbiggings was a multiform aggregate of corners, and gables, and chimneys. In one respect it resembled the master-piece of Inigo Jones—Heriot's Work—at Athens—no two windows were alike, and several of them, from the first enactment of the duty on light, had been closed up, save where here and there a peering hole with a single pane equivocated with the statute and the tax-gatherer. The pête-stones, or by whatever name the scalar ornaments of the gables may be known,—those seeming stairs, collinear with the roof, peculiar to our national architecture, were frequented by numerous flocks of pigeons. The invention, indeed, of that species of ornament, is a fine monumental trait of the hospitality of our ancestors, who, while they were themselves revelling in the hall, after their Border joys of

speed and spoil, thus kindly provided convenient places, where their doves, when returning home heavy and over-fed, with foraging on their neighbours' corn-fields, might repose, and fatten for spit or pie, in unmolested equanimity.

Appended to the mansion, but somewhat of lower and ruder structure, was a desultory mass of shapeless buildings—the stable, sty, barn, and byre, with all the appurtenances properly thereunto belonging, such as peat-stack, dunghill, and coal-heap, with a bivouacry of invalided utensils, such as bottomless boyns, headless barrels, and brushes maimed of their handles—to say nothing of the body of the cat which the undealt-with packman's cur worried on Saturday se'enight. At the far end was the court-house, in which, when the day happened to be wet, the poultry were accustomed to murmur their sullen and envious whiggery against the same weather which made their friends the ducks as garrulous with enjoyment at the midden-hole, as Tories in the pools of corruption. But so it is with all of this world: the good or evil

of whatsoever comes to pass, lieth in the sense by which the accident affects us.

The garden was suitable to the offices and the mansion. It was surrounded, but not inclosed, by an undressed hedge, which in more than fifty places offered tempting admission to the cows. The luxuriant grass walks were never mowed but just before haytime, and every stock of kail and cabbage stood in its garmentry of curled blades, like a new-made Glasgow bailie's wife on the first Sunday after Michaelmas, dressed for the kirk in the many-plies of all her flounces. Clumps of apple-ringgie, daisies and Dutch-admirals, marigolds and nonsoprettes, jonquils and gillyflowers, with here and there a peony, a bunch of gardeners-garters, a sunflower or an orange-lily, mingled their elegant perfumes and delicate flourishes along the borders. The fruit-trees were of old renown; none grew sweeter pears; and if the apples were not in co-rival estimation with the palate, they were yet no less celebrated for the rural beauty of their red cheeks. It is true, that the cherries were dukes, but the plumbs were magnum-bonums.

Where the walks met, stood a gnomenless dial; opposite to which, in a honey-suckle bower, a white-painted seat invited the Laird's visitors of a sentimental turn to read Hervey's Meditations in a Flower-garden; and there, in the still moonlight nights, in the nightingale-singing season of southern climes, you might overhear one of the servant lasses keckling with her sweetheart. But it is time to approach the house, and make our way towards the inmates.

On approaching the door, and applying your hand to the knocker, you catch a broken key hanging by a string from the lion's mouth. The ring was wrenched away at the time of the auld laird's burial by Sparkinhawse, the drowthy portioner, of Drycraigs, when he was coming out from the dirgie, to try if he could find the road to his own home; but, nevertheless, by the key, or your knuckle, you make a noise, which, after being repeated some three or four times, causes the door to open, when either one of the lasses looks from behind it, and says, "What's your wull and pleasure?" or Jock, the Laird's man, comes forth, and leaning his shoulder against the door-cheek, looks in your face till

you have propounded your interrogation. On the present occasion it is Jenny Clatterpans, the kitchen-lass, and, as usual, snodless, snoodless, and shodless, who answers to the summons.

Jenny was not altogether just such an amiable and nymphantine being as the moral master of Lights and Shadows has discovered, glowing and gleaming in the poetical regions of Scottish life; but a substantial armful of those virtues and graces, which, in the shape of well-fleshed, clear-skinned, sonsy, and hardy queans, may be seen, with their legs bared above the knee, trampling in washing-tubs, at the open burnside, or haply, with the handle of an old spade, pursuing forth from the kail-yard a marauding cow, or engaged in some of those other vocations of rural or pastoral drudgery, which are equally natural and prosaical. In truth, Jenny had more of a thorough-going havrelism about her, than of that fond and fine otherism, so interesting in the heroines of romance. She was neither particular in her attire, nor methodical in her work, and her words were unculled—in short, she was a wench likely to be brought to

book without much blushing. But we forget our duty, and have not yet answered to her "wull and pleasure," though she has opened the door, and has dropped behind her the hearth-brush she happened to have in her hand, when our summons was sounded.

Having inquired for the Laird, Jenny replies,

"Deed, sir, he's no right."

"Ay, Jenny, I'm sorry for that—what ails him?"

"Ails! I canna say mickle's the matter wi' him, poor bodie, but he's dwining, and he's no ill either—trowth, ony ha'd o' health he has, is aye at meal-time, and yet he puts a' in an ill skin."

"Is he confined to his room, Jenny?"

"Room, sir! neither a doctor nor a doze o' physic would keep him intil his room."

"Indeed!—Then he must be greatly altered, Jenny; for he was rather always of a sedentary turn."

"That's a' ye ken about him, he's a busy man."

"Busy, Jenny!"

"Ay, sir, dreadful!—He's putting out a

book—Loke, sir, if he's no putting out a book! O that wearyfu' jaunt to Embro' to see the King! It has skail't the daunert wits o' the master—the like o' you and the minister may put out books, but surely the 'stated gentry hae come to a low pass indeed, when they would file their fingers wi' ony sic black art!"

"And what is this book about, Jenny?"

"Na, that's a question amang divines, sir; ye may speer, and I may say yea or nay, but what will't make you the wiser?"

"True, Jenny, I'll never dispute that; but is Mr Mailings not visible?"

"Veesible, sir!"

"May I not see him?"

"What for should ye no see him? At this precious moment of God's time, ye may see him writing his book through the key-hole."

"Through the key-hole, Jenny!—no possible? I never heard of a man writing a book through a key-hole."

"Weel, weel, sir, no to summer and winter on idioticals, or sic like matters o' fact—the Laird told me, that he would na be at hame to a living soul in the king's three kingdoms;

'cause he was inditing his book;—the which I thought was—I'll no just say it was a lee; but if it wasna a lee, it was surely very like it; and therefore, sir, though the master said it was an innocent deplomatical, I hae a notion that it was cousin, and sib to the first-born of Satan, the whilk is Untruth."

This colloquy with Jenny greatly disturbed our wonted philosophical composure. The Laird! Malachi Mailings, writing a book, was a marvel most indigestible; for although he had become of late years somewhat addicted to reading, particularly of the Newspapers, and the Edinburgh Review, which he borrowed from me, about a month after publication, the idea of the inspiring mantle dropping down about his shoulders, surprised me as with the amazement of a new creation, and under the excitement of the moment, pushing Jenny aside, I hastened to his parlour.

CHAPTER II.

On entering the Laird's apartment, I was struck with several changes, additions, and improvements, in the appearance of the room, the consequence of his visit to Edinburgh. For the old map of Europe, which from the days of his grandsire had hung over the mantle-piece, and which time had tarnished into a brown and yellow illegibility, a new one of the two hemispheres was exhibited, with a portrait of the King on the one side, and of the Duke of Wellington on the other. The most conspicuous object, however, was a handsome leather covered library chair, in which he was sitting at a table with books and papers and the other implements of writing before him, like an Edinburgh advocate warsling with the law.

He was apparelled in a dressing-gown, which had evidently been economically made out of

two of his deceased lady's flagrant chintz gowns of dissimilar patterns. His head was adorned with a blue velvet cap, wadded and padded not only to supersede the use of his wig, but even to be warm enough to cause a germination of fancies, if ideas could be raised by anything like the compost in which gardeners force exotics.

As I entered he pushed up his spectacles upon his forehead, and raising his eyes from the paper on which he was writing, threw himself back in the chair, and looked not altogether quite satisfied at being so interrupted.

After the interchange of a few preliminary strictures on the weather on both sides, I began to inquire what he thought of the King, and how he had been pleased with his jaunt to Edinburgh.

"For the King," replied the Laird, "I never looked for a particular civility at his hands, though I have been a Justice of the Peace for the shire more than fifteen years, and was moreover of great service to his crown and dignity, as one of the officers of the first crop of volunteers.—But yon's a pleasant place, yon toun of

Embro'; and the literawty are just real curiosities, and a' philosophers, the whole tot of them. I had an e'e in my neck when I was among them; and maybe some of them shall hear tell o't before long."—And he glanced his eyes significantly towards the papers before him.

"Indeed, Laird! and which of them have you seen?" said I, desirous of hearing his opinion of persons so self-celebrated; but instead of heeding my question, he continued—

"It's my persuasion, however, that there's a state o' matters yonder in great need of a reformation. But it's my intent and purpose to show the consequence of making men of family functy—offeeshy."

"What, Laird?—making men of family—what?"

"Cutting them off by sic legalities as writers to the signet, and advocates, and critics, frae the power of begetting a posterity."

The Laird was in this a little beyond my depth, and I could only rejoin somewhat simply, "And how is it, Laird, you intend to make out all that?"

"Am I no writing my biography—my own

life—wherein the grievance will be made most manifest?"

"Your life, Laird! What can there be in your life to record? The holly-bush before the door has, I should think, had almost as many adventures."

He was plainly piqued at my remark; but he replied, chuckling with the consciousness of being witty,—

"No man in his senses would ever expect to see an ignoramus bush, far less a doddered holly-bush, take up a pen to write a book—Branches are not hands—No, no—no, no."

To an observation at once so pertinent and unanswerable, I could only say, in a subdued tone, that I had no doubt his Memoirs would be highly instructive and interesting.

"It's to be a standard work," was his calm and modestly expressed reply; "and the like o't has been long wanted; for if a stop is not soon put to the growth and increase of the conspiracy that I have discovered, there's no telling what our gentry will be brought to."

"Conspiracy, Laird—what conspiracy?—and discovered by you! I should as soon have ex-

pected to hear you had discovered the longitude or the philosopher's stone, as anything of the sort."

"And is't no the proven fact, that, what with the government at the one end with the taxes, and the labourous folk at the other with their wages, the incomes of our 'stated gentry is just like a candle lighted at both ends?"

"I see, I see, Laird, you have been among the Political Economists—who have neither honour for the rich, nor charity for the poor."

For the space of a minute or so he looked at me eagerly and suspiciously, and then raising himself into an erect posture, said emphatically,

"No man stands in need of a reason to convince him of the animosity of a rhinoceros—do you admit that?"

"For the sake of argument," said I, "the proposition may be allowed."

"Na," said he, falling back in his chair, and spreading out his arms at the same time in the attitude of an astonishment in marble,—"If ye deny a first principle, it is of no use to pursue the argument."

That the Laird had indeed been among the

Athenian philosophers, could no longer be doubted; and that he had in consequence suffered a material change in the habits of his mind, was equally evident. Before the visit to Edinburgh, he was seemingly the easiest of mankind—more like a creature made of wool than of clay; such, indeed, was the sleepy quietude of his nature, that except when stirred by some compulsion of business, or obligation, nothing seemed capable of molesting his tranquillity. But when molested—rare as were such occasions—he was testy, snappish, and self-willed; and the little spurts of temper in which he then indulged, betrayed the spirit of controversy which was slumbering within him, and which, in the vicissitudes of things, it was not improbable events might occur to rouse and call forth. I was, therefore, much less surprised at his propugnacity than at the course his opinions had taken; and becoming more solicitous to see what he had written, than to continue the controversy, I said—

"But in what manner, Laird, have you shown the existence of this alleged conspiracy between the government and the people, to overthrow the

ancient gentry of his Majesty's hereditary kingdom?"

"Is na there the changes in the value of money? I can assure you that I have well considered this portion of the bullion question."

"I should like," said I, with all possible gravity, "to hear your opinion of the bullion question—of course, you examine the causes that affect the circulating medium and originate the agricultural distress?"

"The circulating curse—it's as clear a tax of five per cent on our income, as the five and ten deevelry of the war."

"But, no doubt, you have exposed it properly, and in its true colours—will you have the goodness to read what you have said upon the subject?—for it is a subject which comes home to the business and bosoms of us all. Five per cent! really, Laird, you surprise me—I never imagined it was so much."

"No man can maintain that it's one farthing less—for, since the coming out of the sovereigns, and the crying down of the old honest coin of the realm, both in the price of horse and horn-

cattle, a mulct of a full shilling in the pound has been inflicted on the whole agricultural interest."

"And where does that shilling go to, Laird?"

"Where? but to the bottomless pit, the pouch o' government that they call the sinking fund; and is that no a depreciation?"

"Not to interrupt you, Laird," said I, "but how does the change in the money affect your income?"

"How! I'll show you how—is na small coin the evidence of cheap labour; and when labour is cheap, has not a man of rental the mair to hain for lying money? But the sight o' a farthing now-a-days is good for sair een; it's no to be met wi', but now and then in the shape of a blot in a town grocer's 'count, made out by his prentice in the first quarter of the school-laddie's time. It was a black day for Scotland that saw the Union signed, for on that day the pound sterling came in among our natural coin, and, like Moses' rod, swallow't up at ae gawpe, plack, bodle, mark, and bawbie, by the which mony a blithe ranting roaring rental of langsyne has dwinet and dwinlet into the hungry residue of a wadset."

"But, Laird, without calling in question the correctness of your historical observation, I am at some loss to understand how it happened you have been moved to write your life?"

He made no immediate reply, but, leaning forward with a particularly knowing look, he said, in a half whisper,—

"I'll tell you a secret—it's to pay off one of my heritable bonds. That silly auld havering creature, Balwhidder o' Dalmailing, got a thousand pounds sterling, doun on Blackwood's counter, in red gold, for his clishmaclavers; and Provost Pawkie's widow has had twice the dooble o't, they say, for the Provost's life. Now, if a minister got sae muckle for his life, and a provost twice the dooble for his, I'm thinking a 'stated gentleman should surely get a brave penny for the like wark."

"I will not dispute your logic, Laird; but where are the materials for your life to be found?"

"Here and there," he exclaimed in exultation, striking, at the same time, his breast and forehead; adding, "No man, unless he writes

from his own brains and his own bosim, need put pen to paper."

I assented to the justness of the observation; and, after ingratiating myself as well as I could into his confidence, he, in the end, invited me to stay dinner, and promised, as an indemnity for my consenting, that he would entertain me "with a feast of reason and a flow of saul"—a temptation too strong, and too exquisite, as served up by him, to be resisted.

CHAPTER III.

The Laird's work consisted of about half-a-dozen small copy books, such as schoolboys are in the practice of using, two or three of them with marble covers; on one I observed a parrot, and on another the ruins of Palmyra. The penmanship was not very legible; it was narrow, crampt, and dotty, and the orthography made me pause at the first sentence.

"Ye're troubled wi' my hand o' write," said he, "and deed I must own it's no a schoolmaister's, but wi' a thought o' pains ye'll soon be able to read it."

"I think, Laird, I could make my way with the writing, but the spelling is not for a man in haste."

"Ye may weel say that—no man can spell wi' Johnny Sellblethers the town-bookseller's pens—the bodie had ne'er a christian-like ane

in his aught; and I can assure you, that an ill pen is baith a crabbit and a fashious implement —I now speak from experience; and I hae had words wi' him concerning his pens—but the creature has no a mouthfu o' sense—he's a thing that has nae mair sense nor that bottle—that bottle did I say?—he has nae mair sense nor that fender."

Upon some farther inspection of the manuscript, I saw, as the Laird had justly remarked, that by and by, with some pains, I should be able to make my way through it, in spite of the penmanship, even too of the orthography, but the matter was more difficult to manage than either. It was not a continued and methodical narrative, but consisted of detached notes and memoranda, somewhat like Lord Byron's unpublished Biographical Dictionary; instead, however, of relating to things and accidents which had befallen himself, they were entirely made up of reflections on the price of grain and cattle—denunciations against wages and taxes, ill-paid rents, and all the other evils which agricultural distress is heir to, with here and there an incidental note, such as "my mother died this year, and her burial cost

me a power of money—the coffin was more than five pounds, but it was very handsome;" or, "obligated to roup out John Lownlan's widow—a clamorous woman that." Whether these were in the first or second of his books, I do not exactly recollect; but I could not help remarking, that although the world would justly appreciate the value of his information, I was yet apprehensive the critics would expect some account of his family before he entered on the matter of his own life and opinions. His reason for having omitted it was most satisfactory.

"It would hae been a right down wastrie o' time and paper; and the need o' writing about my progenitors is not an indispensable. Has na our family been a family o' note—that's an ocular fact in history—frae afore the ragman's roll? But if ye think the laws o' the Republic o' Letters call for an account at my hands, I'll no be weighed in the balance and found wanting."

"To be frank and friendly with you, Laird, the laws of the Republic of Letters certainly do require that your book should begin with some account of the family before you were born, and it should likewise tell us something

of your mother's family. It was not, I believe, of the same degree as the Mailings?"

"It's no an easy task," replied the Laird, with a sigh, "to write a history book that will please everybody; but as to my mother, she was come o' pedigree blood, though, it may be said, no just the degree o' our family's."

"Who was she?" said I.

"Her father," resumed the Laird, "was Custocks of Kailyards, an ancient and as weel kent a race as ony within the four quarters o' the realm; she was a co-heiress, and her name was Barbara—Moss o' Peats was married intil her uterine sister, Martha, the other co-heiress o' Kailyards: and they had issue, a son, Ramplor Moss, begotten of her body, meaning the body o' aunty Marthy; and he, being a captain in the king's army, gamblet his property wi' riotous living in foreign lands, till it came to be sold by a decreet o' Court: and so through him there was an end o' that branch o' my mother's family—"

"All this, Laird," said I, "is most important and interesting—And so your father mar-

ried one of the co-heiresses o' Kailyards—and what then ?"

"And what then !—am not I the fruit and issue o' that marriage, in the male line ?—But, poor man, he wasna sparet to beget a better."

"That," replied I, "is much to be regretted, greatly, indeed ; but I always heard he died early, and in very melancholy circumstances."

"As to his dying early, I'll no say it's a' truth, for he was weel stricken in the fifties before his espousal o' my mother ; but his latter end was an event to be held in remembrance ; oh, sir, it was a memento mori."

"Then you have neglected," said I, "by not describing it in your book, an occasion on which you might have given the world a fine impressive moral lesson."

"I am very sorry to hae been sae neglectfu', if ye think sae," replied the Laird.

"Indeed you have been much to blame ; and, considering your talents, I must say you have hidden your candle under a bushel, Laird.—How did your father happen to die ?"

"It's a heavy tale ; but it came to pass after

this manner: ye see he was ane of the Langsyne Club, that some threescore Yules bygane had its howf in a public in the town, keepit by a wife that was by name Luckie Gawsie—and he was a man (meaning my father) o' a pleasantrie in company, as I have often heard the late Sparkinhawse o' Drycraigs tell; mony a sooh and sappy night they had wi' ane anither: there was na a blither bike o' drowthy neibours in a' the shire; Quaigh o' Plunkcorkie was the preses, and Luggie o' Dramkeg the croupier. But mirth and melancholy are the twins o' mortality—walking hand in hand, to and fro', roaring like lions seeking whom they may devour—heh, sirs, that night they visited the public o' Luckie Gawsie—weel may I recollect what Sparkinhawse told me; it was wi' the tear in his e'e, for he was a warm-hearted bodie. We had been squeezing the sides o' the gardevin, and neither o' us were then fasting, but baith jocose, the whilk, as he said, put him in mind o' the auld langsyne. 'Laird,' quo' he—we were sitting in Luckie Gawsie's back room, wi' her tappit hen o' claret wine on the table, according to the use and wont o' the club, and Luggie o' Dramkeg was singing the Gaberloonie

like a nightingale—oh, he was a deacon at a pawky sang—I use his ain words," said the Laird.—

"And what happened?"

"What happened! Drycraigs, in the way of a peradventure, some short time after the sang, gied a glimpse out o'er the table at my father, and seeing something no canny in his glower, said to the preses, 'Plunkcorkie,' said he, 'I'm thinking Auldbiggings is looking unco gash.' 'Gash!' quo' Plunkcorkie, 'nae wonder, he's been dead this half hour; his e'en flew up and his lip fell down just as Dramkeg was singing the verse about the courting at the fire-side; and was I to spoil a gude sang for the likes o' him? so when it was done, through an accidence of memory, I forgot to tell you o' the poplexy.—But,' continued Plunkcorkie, as Drycraigs told me, 'now that it's noticed, we, for a decency, must get the corpse ta'en hame to its ain house.' Whereupon they all raise frae their seats, said Drycraigs.—Was na that a moving sight? and they filled lippies, and in solemn silence drank their auld frien' for the last time; and Quaigh o' Plunkcorkie, the preses, held a glass to my fa-

ther's mouth, but he couldna taste, which was a sure sign he was a dead man; whereupon they all fell to the greeting with the hearts o' men, mourning in affliction."

I exerted myself to the utmost to sympathize with the Laird during this affecting description of the langsyne nights of claret in tappit hens, and my endeavours were of necessity redoubled by his moral reflections on the occasion.

"But," said he, "as one door steeks another opens, and my father's death brought me into the world mair than two moons afore the common course of nature; for ye see, when my mother, through the mist o' a grey March morning, heard a sound coming towards the house, and lookit out at her window, she discern't the three fou lairds bringing her dead gudeman hame—Drycraigs and Dramkeg were harling the body through the mire by the oxsters, his head dangling o'er his breast like an ill-sewed-on button—Plunkcorkie, the preses o' the club, was following in a sorrowfu' condition, carrying my father's wig and his hat, and one of his boots that had come off, no man could tell how, as they were hauling the corpse along the road; and

Drycraigs told me that poor man, Plunkcorkie, was so demented wi' grief, that when he came into the house he had the shank o' the very glass in his hand he had held to his old frien's lips, which, you must allow, was a very touching thing."

"And when they brought home the Laird, what was done?"

"Done! muckle was done—does na everybody ken I'm a seven-month's bairn, the which is the cause of my weakliness, and has been o' the greatest detriment to me a' my days; because had I no been sae defective wi' infirmity, I might hae been walking the Parliament House o' Edinburgh, wi' a blue shaloon pock to haud fees—but a want is no a fault."

"Very true, Laird," said I; "what you say is a most sagacious remark—but if by reason of any innate weakliness of faculty you have been kept from the bar, the world may have no cause to rue the loss of you as a lawyer, since we are so likely to profit by you as an author."

"No, man," was his emphatic answer—"no, man—I was going to make an observe in the

way of philosophy, but let that pass, and do something for the good o' the house."

I had by this time sipped unconsciously the entire contents of my toddy tumbler, and accordingly, upon the Laird's suggestion, I began to replenish.

CHAPTER IV.

After the account which Malachi had given of his birth and parentage, I was curious to see what he had said of his education; but on lifting and opening the first volume, (for he dignified his books with that title,) I found nothing whatever recorded respecting it, nor of anything which had befallen him till he reached his eighteenth year.

"Dear me, Laird," said I, "how is this? You have omitted what is even more important than the account of your family—all the happy days of your childhood."

"Happy days! that's a' ye ken o' them. Oh, if ye but knew what I suffered in the tender years of my childhood! I was persecuted like a martyr—the blains o' Dominie Skelp's tawse ye may yet discern by an inspection—a' the week

there was nothing for me but read, read, read your lesson—write, write, write your copy—add, subtract, multiply, and divide; and on the Sabbath day, when man and beast and spinning-wheel got leave to rest, I was buffetted by Satan ten times waur in the shape o' the Psalms o' David—The deevil hae his will o' them, mony a time thought I, that begat the Question-book."

"But, Laird, pains are pleasant in the recollection, and I should have expected, from the manner in which you of course passed your youth, that there would have been a vernal freshness in the description, such a dewy blossoming in the memory of your sports and recreations, as would have moved the world to reveries of innocence and delight."

"Poo, poo! what is't to be a slave, a nigger slave, but to be flogged on the back wi' a whip? —well do I know a tenderer part than the back, and a whip has but ae scourge, our schoolmaister's tawse had seven—neither intemperance nor old age hae in gout or rheumatic an agony to compare wi' a weel-laid-on whack o' the tawse on a part that for manners shall be nameless."

"Well, Laird, though there is some truth in what you say, yet I never should have thought

you were likely to have required any excessive degree of admonition *a posteriori*."

"But I was hated by the master—he had a pleasure and satisfaction in gripping me by the coat-neck and shaking me wi' a gurl, because I had no instinct for learning. It's my opinion, had I been a justice of the peace at that time, I would hae prosecuted him to the utmost rigour of the law. Do you know, that once in his tantrams he flew on me like a mad dog, and nippit my twa lugs till he left the stedt o' his fingers as plainly upon them as the mark o' Peter's finger and thumb can be seen on the haddock's back. There was na a day I did na get a pawmy but ane, and on it I got twa, the whilk was ca'd in derision a double morning."

"He appears to have been indeed a most irascible dominie; but all was no doubt made up to you, when the blessed hours of play and sunshine came round—buoyant and bounding with your school-fellows——"

"Haud your hand! nane o' your parleyvooing, ye loon that ye are," exclaimed the Laird, half slyly half earnestly, "for the laddies at our school werena like ither laddies—the thought o' the usage they gied me gars me grind my teeth

to this day. The master infectit them wi' his hatred against me, and they never divaul't wi' their torments—sure am I, if there be a deevil that's called Legion, that deevil was the hundred and thirteen laddies at Dominie Skelp's school—for though many in number, they were but ane in nature. Now just think o' what they did—they ance liftit me o'er the minister's dyke and gart me steal his apples!"

"But you were rewarded with a share of the spoil?"

"Ay, yes—I was rewardit—that's nae lee—but how? tell me that?—They made me gie them my hatfu', and when they got it, they a' set up a shout and a cry o' a thief in the yard, which brought out Gilbert the minister's man like a raging bear. He was a contemptuous wretch."

"What did he do to you?"

"Do! he laughed me to scorn wi' a gaffaw, and said he thought I had na spunk for sic a spree—and then out came Mrs Glebanteinds the minister's wife, knocking her nieves at me as if I had been an unrighteous malefactor, till I was

sae terrify't that I terrify't them wi' my cries o' dread. It has been said, indeed, I ne'er got the better o' that fright; and I hae some cause to think no without reason, for I grue wi' the thought o' an apple to this day, like Adam and Eve, when they had begotte ntheir sons and daughters. But I had my satisfaction o' that finger o' scorn, Gilbert, though it was mair than fifteen years after."

Well as I was aware of the Laird's disposition to treasure and cherish resentment, this confession of satisfaction at enjoying revenge so many years after the school-boy prank, made me say in a tone very different from that in which I usually addressed him,—

"Is it possible that a man could harbour anger so long?" My indignation was, however, soon bridled, for I presently recollected to whom I was speaking: his answer was characteristic.

"Had ye felt my provocation, ye would hae been angry at him a' your days, though ye had lived to the age of Methusalem—and yet I was na very austere either."

"What did you to him?"

"I'll tell you, if ye'll thole and listen like a

man o' jurisprudence. Ye see, it came to pass that the minister, being weel stricken in years, stretched out his legs on the bed of sickness and departed this life; whereupon his wife, Mrs Glebantiends, being sequestrated from the stipend, left the manse and went to live in the town on Sir Hairy's Fond,* which is, as you know, a grand provision for the like o' her. Thus it came to pass, that auld Gilbert was ordained to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, which is the portion of man that is born of a woman, and his lot was to howk ditches. When he had laboured at that some dozen years or the like, after the death of his master, he was afflicted wi' an income, and no being able to handle spade or pick, he was constrained to beggary; and so it happened that on the very first morning that he took up the meal-pock for eikrie o' life, as the folk called it, I was standing at the yett looking to see wha might be going to the town,

* The Laird would seem to have forgotten that the "Widows' Fund" was not, at the time of which he was speaking, under the able management of the Rev. Sir Harry Moncrieff.

and wha coming frae't, when, lo and behold! I saw an auld beggar-man, wi' a grey head and a cleaner pock than usual, and it was toom—ye see it was his first morning at the trade—hirpling wi' a stilt towards the avenue; and so hirpling, when he saw me he stoppit, and swither't, and turned round, and was blate to come, the which made me wonder; but belyve, he took off his bonnet and cam to me wi't in his hand, wi' his bald head bare; and when I was marvelling wha this new-set-up beggar could be, (for I had no thought o' Gilbert,) he said, 'Laird, will ye hansel my pock?'—for he was aye a jocose body,—'Will ye hansel my pock, for auld langsyne, Laird?'—'For auld langsyne!' quo' I, 'a hansel in the jougs would better serve you than an almous—gae awa wi' you, ye fause loon! an ye come within the bounds o' Auldbiggings, I'll set the dog on you, for what ye did to me in the manse garden—that's the auld langsyne I keep in memento.'"

"And did he knock you down with his crutch?"

"Na, na, he durstna do that—but I trow he

was dauntit, for he turn't on his heel and put on his bonnet wi' a splurt like a Highlandman in a pet, and powled himsel awa wi' his stilt.

" But," continued the Laird after a pause, during which he looked somewhat doubtfully at me—" but I see ye think I didna do right," adding, " I'm no, however, so hard-hearted as I let wot—for when I saw that I had made an impression, I ran after him and touched him on the shoulder, and putting my hand in my pouch, I gave him a whole penny—twa new bawbees, gude weight, for it was then the days o' the tumbling Tams."

" And what said he?"

" Ye'll aiblins think he was full o' thanks-giving—nae sic thing, but as proud as when he was the minister's man—he took the penny—twa beautiful bawbees it was, and he looked at them, and what do you think he said?—' I'm a beggar noo, and I oughtna to refuse God's charity!' so, withouten a bethank, he hobbled on his way, leaving me standing in the middle of the road wi' my finger in my mouth."

There was something in this story, which at the moment damped my curiosity, and, notwith-

standing the Laird's earnest entreaties to prolong my visit, made me rise abruptly: a little more hastily, too, than was quite consistent with good manners, I bade him for that afternoon farewell. But as I walked homeward, I reflected on the singular circumstance of such a being attempting a history of himself, and soon settled it to my own contentment, that if his book was not likely to furnish many materials for amusement, there was yet enough in his recollections and observations worthy of being a little further sifted; accordingly, although I had left Auldbiggings half resolved never again to pass the threshold, it so happened that before I reached home, my determination was formed to visit him again on the following day.

CHAPTER V.

I HAVE a notion that the auto-biography of an idiot might not only be interesting, but prove an acquisition of no inconsiderable value to the most philosophical thinkers; and it seemed to me, upon reflection, that the Laird's undertaking was less preposterous than I had at first imagined. It was possible that although always regarded by the neighbours as a mere ruminating animal, he might yet, in the course of his time, have observed, in the passing current of things, something worthy of notice which had escaped the attention of men reputed wiser. This idea changed in some degree the estimation I had formed of his labour; I could not, indeed, refrain from thinking even of himself with feelings of augmented consideration.

In this speculative frame of mind I took my

hat and stick next day, and walked saunteringly across the fields towards Auldbiggings, keeping a path which trended towards the house at some distance from the high-road, in order that I might not be disturbed in my reveries by any accidental encounter with those sort of friends who are ever socially disposed to inflict their company upon you, especially when you most desire to walk alone.

This path winded over the Whinny Knowes, an untenanted and unrentable portion of the Laird's domain, famed from time immemorial among the school-boys of the town for nests and brambleberries, and for which they, as regularly as the equinoxial gales, waged a vernal and autumnal war with Jock the Laird's man. For his master, by some peculiar and squire-like interpretation of the spirit and principles of the game laws, claimed and asserted a right of property over them, as sacred and lawful as that which he possessed to his own dove-cot, or the fruit of his garden. Accordingly, as soon as the gowans began to open the silvery lids of their golden eyes in the spring, Jock was posted among the blooming furze and broom, particu-

larly on the Saturday's blessed afternoon, to herd the nests. And in like manner, and as periodically as the same play-hallowed day of the week returned, as soon as the celebrated ruddy apples began to blush on the boughs, he was again sent thither to defend the berries, nor were the oranges of the Hesperides guarded of old by a more indomitable griffon.

It happened on the occasion of which I am speaking, that the warder had taken post for the first or second time for the season to watch the nests—I am not sure if the day, however, was a Saturday, but if it was not, the weather was so bland and bright that it ought to have been. Jock was sitting in a niche of golden broom, and, inspirited by the influence of the birds and blossoms around him, was gaily whistling, it might be for the want of thought, or from the enjoyment of happiness, as he tapered a fishing-rod with an old table-knife of the true Margaret Nicholson edge and pattern. On seeing me approaching, he rose, leaving his task and implement on the grass, and in a style I had never remarked in him before, he raised his hand to his hat, and held it there till I requested him to

use no new ceremony. I said, however, to myself, this is another effect of the King's visit: but as Jock did not accompany the Laird on the occasion to Athens, I became a little pryish to ascertain whether this debonair touching of the hat was derived from the special tuition of his master, or had been acquired from some compeer's authority. Before I had time, however, to ask any question, Jock inquired if I was for "The Place," as the house of Auldbiggings was commonly called by the servants and villagers.

"Ye'll fin' the Laird," said he, "a busy man."

"Indeed—and what is he doing?"

"Doing? what should he be doing, but sitting on his ain louping-on stane, glowring frae him?"

"And call ye that being busy, John?"

"And is't no sae? Is na idleset the wark o' a gentleman—and what more would ye hae him to be doing in that way? what could he do more?"

"Then he has given up writing his book, has he?"

" He maun think o' what to put in't—King David made his Psalms in the watches of the night."

" 'Tis my opinion, John," said I, " that the Laird might do worse than consult you on the subject, considering how long and how well you have been acquainted with himself and all his family."

" I'm thinking," replied Jock, casting his eyes on the ground, " he would come but little speed without the help and counsel o' somebody, living sic a lonely life as he has done; till he gaed to the King's coming hame, it could na be said in a sense that he had cast an ee on the world."

" But your experience in that way, John, has been great; and if he consults his own renown, he will take your advice in every sentence." I had in this my mind's eye on Moliere's Old Woman.

" I'll no deny that I hae had a finger in the pie already; but I was telling him yestreen, after ye went away, when he gied me an account of your applauses, that I thought the book would be better if he would saw it here

and there wi' twa three bonny kittle words out o' the dictioner. If it has a fault, (and what has na?) it's a want o' gentility."

That Jock had long been viceroy over the Laird, was well known to the whole parish; but that he was so deep in his literary counsels, and so participant in his lucubrations, I had not suspected. I felt, therefore, that to indulge curiosity further, by leading him on to the unconscious disclosure of his master's secrets, would be as little consonant to gentility, as the want of kittle words in the Memoirs. Accordingly, partly to appease my own compunctions, and partly to soothe him into an oblivion of the impertinence of which I had been so guilty, I complimented him on his long and faithful attachment to the Laird, and on the confidence which he enjoyed, and which he merited.

"And he weel deserves to be weel servit," was the answer. "Is na he come o' a parentage o' pedigree, and born wi' a silver spoon in his mouth to an heritage o' parks and pastures, woods and waters, and a' the other commodities that mak blood gentle?"

Hitherto I had known little more of Jock than

by sight; but I discovered by this accidental conversation that he was worthy of all the celebrity he enjoyed among the neighbours for the sagacity of his remarks, and the singularity of his sayings, many of the latter having acquired the currency of proverbs; but whether owing to the value of the bullion, or to the peculiarities of the mintage, might perhaps admit of some controversy. It was clear, however, that Jock was worthy of his master; nor in the sequel will it be questioned, that the Laird deserved such a man. But as it is both fit and expedient that the courteous reader should also become a little more acquainted with Jock, it may be as well to mention a few particulars of his personal history and character, while the scene of my own role in the drama is changing from the Whinny Knowes to the parlour of Auldbiggings.

Jock, or John Dabbler, as he ought to be called, when we quit the free vernacular of our colloquial pen, and indite with the recondite dignity of history, was the son of one of the Laird's cotters. For some four or five years after his birth, it was the unshaken opinion of

his mother that he was born to distinction, inasmuch as he had, according to her account of him, always showed a greater inclination to eat than to work; but increase of years, which expanded his capacity for the former, brought no compensating alacrity for the latter; and in consequence, as he would neither learn a town-trade, nor help his father in the labour of dykes and ditches, she obtained for him, about the age of seven, a sort of ashypet office in the Laird's kitchen, where, in course of time, he acquired a grey duffle coat with a red collar, and was regarded as the helper and successor of an old man, who had spent his whole life in the honourable vocation of flunkie to three generations of the Auldbiggings.

At the era of which we are treating, Jock, though far advanced into the wane of manhood, still retained the familiar callant abbreviation of his baptismal epithet, and still as devoutly believed, as on the first day when he entered the house, that the whole earth contained but two men worthy of worship—the King and the Laird—but to which the prime honour and the firstlings of homage were due,

he had never determined to his own satisfaction. The leaning certainly, however, was in favour of the Laird; for, never having seen the King, he justly remarked, when sometimes drawn into controversy on the subject, that far-off fowls had fair feathers—thereby intimating, that upon a nearer inspection, and closer comparison, the difference would be found less between them than in the alleged disparity of the pomp and circumstance of their respective conditions.

Besides this personal opinion of the superiority of his master, Jock had as strong a feeling of property in everything belonging to the Laird as the Laird had himself, and probably considered himself as much an integral portion of the estate as the time-honoured holly-bush on the green, of which I have already spoken. But in this feeling there was none of that persuasion of a community of goods, which is sometimes discovered among the domestics of the best-regulated families. On the contrary, Jock was as faithful to his menial trusts as the key or the mastiff; as true as the one, and not less vigilant than the other. It was owing to the impulse of

this fidelity that our conversation on the Whinny Knowes was so suddenly interrupted, and the leisure afforded for this digression. For, just as I was on the point of sifting his opinion as to the constituents of gentle blood, he happened to discover a piquet of the school-boys advancing towards the Knowes, and abruptly darted from me to challenge their intrusion.

CHAPTER VI.

I DID not find the Laird, as Jock said I should, sitting busy with idleness on the louping-on stone at his gate, but in the parlour, and with the insignia of authorship arranged before him, installed in the library chair so particularly before described.

After the customary interchanges of visitation inquiries, he reverted to the subject of our yesterday's conversation.

"I hae been," said he, "a thought ravelled in mind wi' what ye were saying concerning the specialities o' my father and mother's kith and kin; but the book ye would hae me to make, is no like what I mean to do—mine's to be a book o' soleedity, showing forth the wastrie of heritages by reason o' the ingrowth o' trade and taxes."

I was grieved to find the old gentleman really so much of a political economist; but as to have disputed with him would have served no purpose, I only replied—

"No doubt, Laird, any book you write will be well worthy of attention; and if it does not suit the plan of your present work to enter into those domestic details and circumstances of householdry, which none can describe better, perhaps you may favour the world with something of that sort hereafter."

"Ye're no without a nerve o' discernment—I can see that," was his self-complacent answer; "and I'll no say what's in the egg-bed o' my brain—but no to keckle ower soon, I hae been thinking a' this morning's meditation, that if I get a satisfactory solacium for the turn in hand, I may be able belyve to pay off another o' the bonds, and so, by a graduality, clear the estate and die wi' a free income."

When he first told me that his motive in undertaking to write his life was to pay off one of the mortgages, the idea was too ludicrous to leave any serious impression; but this repetition of it made me suspect the debt lay more heavily

upon him than I was aware of. I knew, indeed, that from the death of his wife, his affairs had been ill managed, and that for many years the residue of his rental—that which remained after paying the interest on the heritable bonds, was scarcely sufficient for his thriftless expenditure; but that he felt anything like the actual pinchings of pecuniary difficulty, had never occurred to me. I did not, however, then choose to ask him any direct question on the subject; but it was impossible not to pity the helplessness and infirmity of the poor old man, who could imagine that from any resource so ineffectual as his pen, the means might be obtained to abate the pressure of embarrassment; nevertheless, I said to him, half jocularly,—

"But what can it signify to you, Laird, to die with a clear income, unless you intend to marry again, and mean to provide for a young family, seeing that at present you have no descendent, nor even an heir within the fifth degree of cousinship?"

He looked at me steadily askance for about the space of a minute, and then said with an

accent in which there was a slight inflexion of sadness,—

"Ye're no acquaint wi' Hugh Caption, the writer?"

"I have heard of him; but I hope you have more sense, Laird, than to go to law?"

"So think I mysell," was his answer, expressed somewhat sedately; "but it's no the case wi' everybody."

"How, Laird!" cried I, startled by the import of the observation, and really feeling for him more anxiety than I affected; "blameless in walk and conversation as you have always been, is it possible that you can have fallen into the snares of Caption?"

"He's but the claw o' the case," replied the Laird, adding, with a half-suppressed sigh, as it were in soliloquy, "and it's a claw that needs parin': an eagle's talons may tear the flesh frae the bone, but his grasping grip's enough to rive the seven senses out o' the soul."

"I am grieved to hear you say so. How did you happen to fall into his clutches? By whom is he employed?"

"Stop, stop," interrupted the Laird; "the mair haste the waur speed—bridle the unicorn o' your impatience, and I'll tell you all the outs and ins o't. Ye see, when Mr Rupees the Nawbub came hame frae Indy, and bought the Arunthrough property frae the Glaikies, who, like sae mony ithers o' the right stock o' legitimate gentry, hae been smothered out o' sight by the weed and nettle overgrowths o' merchandise and cotton-weavry, he would fain hae bought Auldbiggings likewise, and sent that gett o' the de'il and the law, Caption, to make me an offer; but I was neither a prodigal son nor an Esau, to sell my patrimony for a mess o' pottage; so I gied him a flea in his lug, and bade him tell the Nawbub to chew the cud o' the sin o' covetousness, the whilk is disappointment."

"And from that I suppose, Laird, you and Mr Rupees quarrelled?"

"Oh no, it was the beginning to a great cordiality o' friendship, for he came o'er here the next day, and made a decent apology, inviting me in the civillest manner, to dine wi' him, and was most enterteening about hoo they hunt elephants wi' tygers instead o' hounds;

telling me, among ither news, o' the braw thing he did to a great Mogul, that was a Pishawa in Hydrobab, and had a Durbah. In short, we came to an understanding, and ae night, when we were sitting by oursells, drinking a bottle o' his best Madæra wine, that was eleven years in wood in Bengal before he bought it, and sixteen in the bottle after; he said that he had some spare money, which he would be glad to lend on easy terms, for seven years, or even a langer period, begging, if I should hear of ony gentleman in want, to gie him an inkling."

It was not difficult to discern from this the machination of the Nabob's friendship for the innocent Laird, and I shook my head.

"Deed," said Malachi, "ye may weel shake your head, for his wine was a flee, and his money a hook, that I was a silly saumon to swallow. But he won upon me, so I told him o' the wadsets on Auldbiggings, and of the twa heritable bonds o' the doers for the young leddies o' Hainings, the which might be called up in a day's notice, and thus it came to pass, frae less to mair, that I covenanted to take as meikle o' his siller as would pay off that precarious obli-

gation, the thought of which was like guilt to my night's rest."

"And having so allured you to take his money," said I, "he now vexes you for repayment?"

"Na, he does far waur. He has gotten, the gude kens how, the rights to the other wadsets, and put them intil the Nebuchadnezzar-like talons o' Caption, who has sent me word, that if the debt's no redeemed afore Whitsunday, he's instructed to proceed; and he's, I needna tell you, a sinner that skips, when he says the Lord's prayer, 'forgie our debts as we forgie our debtors;' so ye see there is a needcessity for me to do something—and books being in request, I could think o' naething easier than making ane to help me in the coming stress, money being scarce to borrow, and land ill to sell."

By this disclosure, it was evident that the poor Laird's circumstances were much worse than I had conjectured; for upon inquiring the amount of the mortgages, I was grieved to find it almost equal to the reputed value of his whole estate, depreciated as the value of land was at that time. I thought, however, if the character

of the transaction was properly represented to the Nabob, that the apprehension of public odium might induce him, if not to forego the prosecution entirely of so harsh a suit, to mitigate the pressure of it by some indulgence as to time, especially as, from the date of his arrival in the neighbourhood, he had cultivated popularity, and not by the least ostentatious means. Accordingly, I offered to call on Dr Lounlans, the minister of the parish, to beg his mediation in the business; but on mentioning his name, a change came over the complexion of the Laird, and a slight convulsive shudder of repugnance vibrated through his whole frame. He made no answer, but looked at me suspiciously askance; and then taking off his purple velvet cap, rubbed his bald head with his hand, and fetched a deep breath, which terminated in something like a sigh.

"You do not seem," said I, "to approve of my suggestion. But a man of Dr Lounlans's personal character, with the great ascendency which his eloquence gives him over the minds of all who approach him, is, in such an affair as

yours, Laird, the most likely to prove an effective advocate."

"When that Neezam o' the Carnatic, Rupees, offered me his money, he shook me by the hand, wi' meikle flattering confidentiality," replied the Laird, after a pause of about the space of a minute; "but the thought o' his covetous deceitfulness is neither sae sour nor sae bitter, as to think I would come under an obligation to the like o' Dominie Lounlans."

The energy with which this was uttered, had more in it of alarm than of contempt. The tone was at variance with the language, and the look was expressive of aversion rather than of dread. It was evident, indeed, that some skinless feeling had been touched; and that something had occurred in the previous history of the Laird, regarding the amiable and eloquent preacher, of which I had not heard. In that moment my eye happened to glance towards one of the biographical copy-books on the table, and I suddenly recollected the note respecting the widow Lounlans, whom the Laird had been obliged to roup out of the farm, and whose clamour on the occasion he had so emphatically recorded.

"Is Dr Lounlans," said I, "any relation to that widow, who gave you so much trouble long ago?"

"Isna he her son? and didna he set himself in revenge against me to get the kirk? If he hadna been stirred up, and egget on by a malice prepense, would he ever hae daur't to show his face in this parish, far less in our poopit, driven out o't as his mother and the rest o' them were, black wi' disgrace in my debt, that wasna pay't for ten years, though to be sure when it was pay't she alloo't interest on the interest; but that was only out o' a pridefu' spite to humble me, 'cause o' my justice; for there was no need o' sic payment, as I would hae been content wi' the single interest. But it's what we're to expec frae the upsetting o' the lower orders. It was the machinations o' thae very Lounlans that first opened my een to the conspiracy that's working the downfall and overthrow of sae mony birthrights o' our national gentry. But if ye kent the original cause of their hatred to me, ye would be none surprised to see me sae grue at the thought of being behadin' to ane o' them."

"Why, I think that's pretty well explained by what you have just told me. It was to be expected they would bear a resentful remembrance of the manner in which you drove them from the parish."

"They went of their own free wull," exclaimed the Laird, eagerly, as if to defend himself from a reproach—"Had my rent been paid, I wouldna hae molested them, and they might have staid in the parish for me, when I got them off the farm—but the woman had a hatred o' me lang afore a' that."

"And for what reason?"

"For no reason at a' but the very want o't; for when she was young she was a bonnie lassie, wi' blithe e'en, and cheeks like a Flanders baby; and I would hae made her leddy of Auldbiggings—But I hae written a' the particulars about it here; the which ye may read, while I step to the Whinny Knowes, to see what Jock's doing; and when ye're done ye can follow me."

As soon as the Laird left the room, I accordingly began to read; but I had not proceeded many sentences when I was tempted, of course by the Evil one, to copy the chapter verbatim.

Whether, in doing so, I have been guilty of any breach of faith, the critic may determine for himself, while the compositor is setting the extract.

CHAPTER VII.

The Laird began the record of his eighteenth year in these words:—

"There livt at this time, on ye fermsted of Broomlans, a pirson that was a woman, by calling a widow; and she and her husband, when he was in this lyf, had atween them, Annie Daisie, a dochter; very fair she was to look upon, cumly withal, and of a feeleeceety o' nature.

"This pretty Annie Daisie, I kno not hoo, found favor in my eyes, and I maid no scruppel of going to the kirk every Sabbatha day to see her, though Mr Glebantiends was, to a certentye, a vera maksleepie preecher. When I foregathered with her by accidence, I was all in a confewshon; and when I would hae spoken to her wi' kindly words, I coud but look in her

cleer een and neigher like Willie Gouk, the haivrel laddie; the whutch maid her jeer me as if I had a want, and been daft likewyse; so that seeing I cam no speed in coorting for myself, I thocht o' telling my mother, but that was a kittle job—howsoever, I took heart, and said

" 'Mother—'

" 'Well, son,' she made answer, 'what woud ye?'

" 'I'm going to be marriet,' quo' I.

" 'Marriet!' cried she, spredding oot her arms wi' a consternayshun—'And wha's the bride?'

" I didna like just to gie her an even-down answer, but said I thought myselph old enough for a helpmeat to my table, whutch caused her to respond with a laff; whereupon I told her I was thinking of Annie Daisie.

" 'Ye'll shoorly ne'er marry the like o' her—she's only a gairner's dochter.'

" But I thocht of Adam and Eve, and said, 'We're a' come of a gairner.' The whuch to heer, caused her presentlye to wax vera wroth with me; and she stampit with her foot, and called me a blot on y^e skutshon o' Auldbiggings;

then she sat doon, and began to reflek with herself; and after a season, she spoke rawshonel about the connexion, saying she had a wife in her mind for me, far more to the purpose than sitch a cawsey danser as Annie Daisie.

"But I couldna bide to hear Annie Daisie mislikent, and yet I was fear't to commit the sin of disobedience, for my mother had no mercy when she thocht I rebell't against her othority; so I sat down, and was in treebolayshon, and then I speert with a flutter of affliction, who it was that she had will't to be my wyfe.

"'Miss Betty Græme,' said she, 'if she can be persuaded to tak sic a headowit.'

"Now, this Miss Betty Græme was the tocherless sixth dochter o' a broken Glasgow Provost, and made her leeving by seamstress-wark and floowring lawn; but she was come of gentle blood, and was herself a gentle creature, though no sae blithe as bonnie Annie Daisie; and for that, I told my mother I would never take her, though it should be the death o' me. Accordingly I ran out of the hoos, and took to the hills, and wistna where I was, till I found myself at

the door of the Broomlands, with Annie Daisie before me, singing like a laverock as she watered the yarn of her ain spinning on the green. On seeing me, however, she stoppit, and cried, 'Gude keep us a', Laird, what's frighten'd you to flee hither?'

"But I was desp'rate, and I ran till her, and fell on my knees, in a lover-like fashon; but, wha would hae thocht it? she dang me over on my back, and as I lay on the ground she watered me with her watering-can, and was like to dee with laffing: the which sign and manifestation of hatred on her part quencht the low o' love on mine; and I raise and went hame, drookit and dripping as I was, and told my mother I would be an obedient and dutiful son. Soon after this, Annie Daisie was marriet to John Lounlans; and there was a fulsome fraising about them when they were kirkit, as the cumliest cupple in the parish. It was castor-oil to hear't; and I was determin't to be up-sides with them, for the way she had jiltit me.

"In the meanwhile my mother, that never, when she had a turn in hand, alloo't the grass to grow in her path, invited Miss Betty Græme

to stay a week with us; the which, as her father's family were in a straitened circumstance, she was glad to accep; and being come, and her mother with her, I could discern a confabling atween the twa auld leddies—Mrs Græme shaking the head of scroopolosity, and my mother laying doon the law and the gospel—all denoting a matter-o'-money plot for me and Miss Betty. At last it came to pass, on the morning of the third day, that Miss Betty did not rise to take her breakfast with us, but was indisposed; and when she came to her dinner, her een were blear't and begrutten. After dinner, however, my mother that day put down, what wasna common with her housewifery, a bottle o' port in a decanter, instead o' the gardevin for toddy, and made Miss Betty drink a glass to mak her better, and me to drink three, saying, 'Faint heart never won fair leddy.' Upon the whilk hint I took another myself, and drank a toast, for better acquaintance with Miss Betty. Then the twa matrons raise to leave the room, and Miss Betty was rising too; but her mother laid her hand upon her shoother, and said, 'It's our lot, my dear, and we maun bear

with it.' Thus it came to pass, that me and Miss Betty were left by ourselves in a very comical situation.

"There was silence for a space of time between us; at last she drew a deep sigh, and I responded, to the best of my ability, with another. Then she took out her pocket napkin, and began to wipe her eyes. This is something like serious coorting, thocht I to myself, for sighs and tears are the food of love; but I was na yet just ready to weep; hoosever, I likewise took out my pocket napkin, and made a sign o' sympathy by blowing my nose, and then I said—

"'Miss Betty Græme, how would ye like to be Leddy of Auldbiggings under my mother?'

"'Oh, heavens!' cried she, in a voice that gart me a' dinle—and she burst into a passion of tears; the whilk to see so affectit me that I couldna help greeting too—the sight whereof made her rise and walk the room like a dementit bedlamite.

"I was terrifyt, for her agitation wasna like the raptures I expectit; but I rose from my seat, and going round to the other side of the table

where she was pacing the floor, I follow't her, and pulling her by the skirt, said, in a gallant way, to raise her spirits—'Miss Betty Græme, will ye sit down on my knee?'—I'll ne'er forget the look she gied for answer—but it raised my courage, and I said, 'E'en's ye like, Meg Dorts'—and with a flourish on my heel, I left her to tune her pipes alane. This did the business, as I thocht; for though I saw her no more that night, yet the next morning she came to breakfast a subdued woman, and my mother, before the week was out, began to make preparations for the wedding.

"But, lo and behold!—one afternoon, as Miss Betty and me were taking a walk at her own requeesht on the high road, by came a whusky with a young man in it, that had been a penny-clerk to her father, and before you could say, hey cockilorum, she was up in the gig, and down at his side, and aff and away like the dust in a whirlwind.

"I was very angry to be sae jiltit a second time, but it wasna with an anger like the anger I suffert for what I met with at the hands of Annie Daisie. It was a real pawshon. I ran hame

like a clap o' thunder, and raged and rampaged till Mrs Græme was out of the house, bag and baggage. My mother thought I was gane wud, and stood and lookt at me, and didna daur to say nay to my commands. Whereas, the thocht o' the usage I had gottin frae Annie Daisie bred a heart-sickness o' humiliation, and I surely think that if she had not carried her scorn o' me sae far, as to prefer a bare farmer lad like John Lownlans, I wad hae sank into a decline, and sought the grave with a broken heart. But her marrying him roosed my corruption, and was as souring to the milk of my nature. I could hae forgiven her the watering; and had she gotten a gentleman of family, I would not have been overly miscontented; but to think, after the offer she had from a man of my degree, that she should take up with a tiller of the ground, a hewer of wood, and a drawer of water, was gall and wormwood. Truly, it was nothing less than a kithing of the evil spirit of the democraws that sae withered the green bay-trees of the world, when I was made a captain in the volunteers, by order of the Lord-Lieutenant, 'cause, as his Lordship said, of my stake in the country.

But guilt and sin never thrive, and she had her punishment."

Thus far had I proceeded with the extract, when I heard the Laird's foot on the stair. I knew it by the sound of his stick on the steps, by which it was accompanied, and it made me hastily, and, I must confess, not without something like the trepidation which is supposed to attend the commission of a larceny, fold up the paper, and hide it in my pocket, which I had scarcely done and composed myself into a studious attitude, with the manuscript in my hand, when the old gentleman entered the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the Laird had resumed his place in the library chair, I saw by his manner, and particularly by the peculiar askance look he gave me, and which was only habitual to him while under the influence of jealousy or of apprehension, that something had occurred, during his visit to the Whinny Knowes, to ruffle his wonted equanimity; but as he evidently made an effort to conceal his perturbation, I abstained from saying anything which might lead him to suppose I observed it: on the contrary, I remarked, with reference to the treatment he had received in his courtships, that he certainly had suffered much from the cruel hands of womankind.

He again looked askance at me, and smiled for a moment, with a countenance as pleased and simple in its expression as the naif relaxation of sorrow on the features of a child, when in-

demnified with an apple or a toy for some heartfelt affliction; he then said:—

"But in those days, I was better able to bear a' that and meikle mair, than within that volume of the book it written is of me, as in the words of King David, I may say, speaking specially of that volume beneath the cuff of your sleive; for now I'm auld, and a wee blast o' a blighting wind snools the pride o' the doddered tree. What would ye think? There was Caption, and Mr Angle the landsurveyor, wi' brazen wheels within wheels, and the Nawbub, (Belzebub's ower gude a hame for him,) directing ane of his flunkies to run here wi' the chain, and there wi' the mark. They were measuring my lands—the lands o' my forefathers!"

"Not possible," said I, unaffectedly participating in the feelings of the helpless and dispirited old man. "If no better sentiment existed among them, some deference to public decorum might have restrained Rupees till the mortgages were regularly foreclosed, or at least till he had your permission."

"For the possibility of the trespass," replied the Laird, "I'll no undertake to argue; but for

the fact, that has been proven a truth by deed o' payment."

"Payment! to what do you allude?"

"I'll tell you. You see, when I beheld them around the brazen racks and torments of valuation, I stood still, marvelling if I wasna dreaming the vision o' Ezekiel the prophet, and Jock seeing me in that trance, came running in a splore o' wonder, crying, 'Odsake, Laird, if John Angle, the surveyor, hasna a loadstone watch in his curiosity, that tells the airts o' the wind!'"

The Laird's eyes at this crisis of his narrative kindled, and he became agitated with indignation. "My corruption rose," said he, "and stamping wi' my foot, I said to Jock, 'How durst you let the Boar into our vineyard? The bairns o' the town would tak but eggs, and birds, and blackberries, but Rupees and his rajahs are come to rob us o' home and ha'.' Whereupon Jock, he's as true's a dog, before the shape o' my breath was melted in the air, ran to them, and wi' the butt o' a fishing-rod he had in his hand, smashed at ae blow a' their wheels o' evil prophecy into shivers, and told Caption, that if he didna

leave our land, he would mak sowther o' his harns to mend them. Then there arose a sough and sound o' war, and rumours o' war, which caused me to walk towards them in my dignified capacity as one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, and I debarred them in the King's name, and with his royal authority, from trespassing on my ground; trampling the rising corn, doing detriment wi' their hooves to the herbage, and transgressing the bounds o' dyke and fence, to say nothing of yetts and ditches, taking John Angle to be a witness against Rupees, and lodging instruments o' protest, in the shape of a shilling, in the hands of Caption himsell, 'cause he's a notary public."

"And did he take them?" said I, not less surprised than astonished at such unwonted spirit and decision on the part of the Laird.

"Tak them! he durstna refuse; for I told him, if he did, his refusal was a thing that would make the fifteen Lords o' Embro redden on their benches."

"What then happened?"

"It would have done your heart good to see what happened. There was Rupees slinking and

sidling awa' wi' his tail atween his legs, and John Angle, wi' a rueful countenance, gathering up the catastrophes of his oglet."

"But what did Caption do?"

"He's the seventh son of Satan, and, of course, has by birth and instinct mair skill in deevilry than his father. He stood looking at me wi' a girn that was nothing short o' a smile o' destruction, and then he said: 'Laird,' quo' he, and ye wouldna hae thought that honey could hae melted in his mouth, 'I'll say nothing of this here, but——' and wi' that he walked away. Noo, what could he mean wi' that 'but'? —I'm frightened for that but—But's an oraculous word frae the lips o' the law."

I could not but sympathize with the poor Laird's apprehensions. The character of Caption allowed of no doubt as to the persecution which would ensue, and it was not uncharitable to think that his malicious machinations would be supported by his rich and unprincipled client. Under these feelings and that impression, I again said: "You must indeed permit me to beg the mediation of Dr Lounlans. If any man can avert the trouble and vexation to which you

are so unhappily exposed, he alone of all the parish——"

"Do you see that picture of the King on the wall?" replied the old man. "Bid it come out frae ahint the glass, and go to the Manse, and drink a glass o' wine wi' Dr Lounlans, and I'll be there when it does that, and beseech the Doctor to supplicate for me."

"Really, Mr Mailings, you surprise me. Forty years might have quenched the anger you felt against his mother for rejecting your suit, the proffer of your love."

"O! I was willing to forgie her for that—I had forgien her, and had amaist forgotten't; but when her gudeman dee't, and I was constrained by course o' law to roup her out o' the farm, I'll never forgie what she did then—no, no, never. She stir't the country like a wasp's byke about me—I durstna mudge on the King's highway without meeting revile and molestation. It's no to be told what I suffer't. The cripple bodie, auld Gilbert, that was the minister's man, wudna tak an amous ae day frae me—he ne'er got the offer o' another—'cause, as he said, surely I was needfu' o't mysel. Heard ye ever sic

impiddance? and a' this for acting according to law, as if to do sae were a sin!"

There was enough in this statement to convince me that the conduct of the Laird towards the widow and her children had not been exactly in unison with public opinion, and I replied, "that certainly, although to act according to law never ought to be regarded as a sin, yet times and occasions will sometimes arise when it may be thought a shame—as, for instance, Laird, the treatment you are now suffering from Rupees."

"But there's an unco difference atween the like o' me and Mrs Lounlans," was his answer; the force of which derived considerable emphasis from his pettish and mortified accent. He added, however, in a lowlier tone—"Rupees might hae a decency for a neighbour that he was sae blithe to mess and mell wi', either in his ain house or here."

This egotism would perhaps have moved other feelings than it did, had it been said at another time, and not so immediately in comparison with his own harsh treatment of her, on whom he had been so willing to bestow his undimi-

nished fortune; but to have reminded him of any similarity in the aspect of their respective impoverished circumstances, while he was sitting in the defencelessness of age, and with such evidence of effectless endeavour to avert inevitable ruin lying on his table, would have required the extenuation of some apology for myself. Guilt in fetters hath claims on Charity which Justice dare not forbid.

The reluctance of the old man to allow the mediation of Dr Lounlans, was plainly to be ascribed to any sentiment but contrition. The paleness which overspread his countenance when I first suggested the expedient, showed that his feelings had a deeper source than pride, and were mingled with recollections which awakened the associations of sensual repugnance, as well as those of moral antipathy. My curiosity, in consequence, became excited to hear something more of the history of Dr Lounlans's family; and as I was still desirous, notwithstanding the Laird's determination to the contrary, to procure the Doctor's good offices to mitigate the severity of the Nabob's proceedings, I resolved to call at the Manse on my way home, partly to

represent the unhappy state of the old man, and partly, if chance favoured, to obtain some further account of transactions so manifestly bitter in the remembrance. Accordingly, after a few general observations, chiefly of an admonitory cast, as to the caution requisite to be adopted in dealing with his adversaries, I bade the Laird good afternoon, with a promise to return next day.

CHAPTER IX.

After leaving the house, and having proceeded about half-way down the avenue towards the gate, which opened upon the highway, I paused and looked back with a much greater disposition to indulge in an amicable sentimental vein, than I had ever thought it possible for the mortgage-mouldered gables of Auldbiggings to have awakened. But in that same moment I was roused from the reverie into which I was falling, by the pattering of footsteps nimbly approaching from the gate. I knew those footsteps by the sound of haste which was in them, and, could I have escaped unnoticed, I would have eschewed the evil of the owner's presence. I was grieved, indeed, to think that the Laird's impending fate had already become so publicly known as to call forth

the afflicting commiseration of Mrs Soorocks, whose sole business and vocation in life consisted in visiting those among her neighbours who were suffering either under misfortune or anxiety, and feelingly, as she herself called it, "sympatheesing with their dispensation." But as it was impossible to retire without being observed, I went forward with a quickened pace, in order that I might not be detained by her. In this, however, I failed; for although I affected to be in quite as much haste as herself, and on more urgent business, she laid her hand upon my arm, and entreated me to tell her all the particulars, and if it was true that Mr Rupees had been knocked down by the Laird; sedately, and with a sympathetic voice, asserting her perfect conviction that the rumours in respect to that must be unworthy of credit.

"But," said she, "when the waur has come to the warst, Auldbiggings has only to step o'er the way to the house of Barrenbraes, and make choice of one of the sisters for his livelihood. Poor leddies, they hae lang waited for a man to speer their price; and in his state of the

perils of poverty, he needna be nice, and neither o' them has any cause to be dorty."

Now it happened that the maiden sisters of Barenbraes, Miss Shoosie and Miss Girzie Minnygaff, had long been the peculiar objects of Mrs Soorocks' neighbourly anxieties, and the source of her great interest in their fate and fortunes requires that some account should be given of their family and peculiar condition.

In the days of their youth they had never been celebrated for any beauty. Miss Shoosie was at this time only in her fiftieth year, but so mulcted of the few graces which niggard nature had so stingily bestowed, that she was seemingly already an aged creature. Her sister looked no younger, even although, as Mrs Soorocks often said, she had two years less of sin and misery to answer for.

Originally there had been three sisters; but the eldest, during the life of their father, made what he called an imprudent marriage, at which he was irreconcilably indignant, because it did not suit the state of his means to give his daughter any dowry, an expedient not singular on similar occasions. Captain Chandos, the husband,

an English officer of family and good prospects, was on his part no less offended at being so undervalued, and in disgust carried his bride into Warwickshire, declaring his determination never to hold any communication or intercourse with her relations. Thus it happened, when the old gentleman died, that the two spinsters succeeded to the house and heritage,—of course there was no money; but the estate was entailed, and Mrs Chandos, as the first born, was the heiress. Her sisters, however, never deemed it expedient to make any inquiry respecting her; at the same time, they held and gathered as if they hourly expected she would revisit them as an avenger. This apprehension was accepted by their consciences for the enjoyment they derived from the indulgence of their natural avarice.

When they had been some four or five years in possession, a rumour reached the neighbourhood that Captain Chandos had succeeded to the title and estates of his uncle, a baronet; and Mrs Soorocks being one of the first who chanced to hear the news, with all the christian eagerness for which she was so justly cele-

brated, lost no time in hastening to congratulate the sisters on the accession of dignity, which had come to their family by that marriage, which they with their father had so expediently reviled.

After relating what she had heard, she added, in her most soothing manner: "The only thing, Miss Shoosie—the only thing that I'm grieved for, is the thought of what will become of you and Miss Girzie in your auld days."

"Auld days!" exclaimed Miss Girzie.

"Deed, Miss Girzie," resumed the sympathizing visitor, "it's a vera melancholious thing; for, as ye are baith never likely to be married, it will come to pass in the course of nature, that ye'll belyve be at a time o' life when ye can neither work nor want; and no doubt Sir Rupert and his Leddy will call on you to count and reckon with them for every farthing ye hae gotten o' theirs. Nothing less can be expected from their hands, after the way they were driven, in a sense, from home and hall, by your father—I hope it wasna true, though the fact has been so said, that ye were art and part in that unpardonable iniquity and crying sin

against family affection. But for all that, as the English are well known to be a people of a turn o' mind for generosity, I would be none surprised to hear that the Baronet intends to be merciful—surely, indeed, he'll never be so extortionate as to make you pay merchant's interest at the rate of five per cent, when it is well known ye have been getting no more than four from the bank; and as for the wadset o' your heritable bond on the lands of Auldbiggings, there will be room to show you great leniency, for I am creditably informed that if the estate were brought to sale the 'morn, it wouldna pay thirteen shillings and four pence in the pound."

But notwithstanding these prophetic anticipations, the spinsters were not molested. It could not, however, be altogether said they were allowed unquestioned possession, for Mrs Soorocks never saw them, either at church or in her visitations, without obliging them to endure the kindest inquiries concerning Sir Rupert and Lady Chandos.

One morning she called on them at rather an unusual early hour with a newspaper in her hand, and a condoling spirit, most amiably ex-

pressive in the sad composure of a countenance evidently dressed for an occasion of great solemnity.

"I'm in a fear, leddies," said she, "that the papers hae gotten doleful news this day for you—Heh, sirs! but life is a most uncertain possession, and so is all worldly substance. But maybe it's no just so dreadful as is herein set forth; but if it should be the worst, you and Miss Girzie, Miss Shoosie, are no destitute of a religious support; and it never could be said that the Baronet was a kind brother, though, for that matter, it must be alloo't no love was lost between you; nevertheless, decency will cause you to make an outlay for mournings, and considering the use ye have had of his money, ye oughtna to grudge it."

"And what's this Job's comforting ye hae brought us the day?" said Miss Girzie, somewhat tartly; but Mrs Soorocks, without answering her pungent interrogation, gave the newspaper to Miss Shoosie, saying—

"Ye'll find the accidence in the second claw of the third page; see if ye think it's your gude-brother that has broken his neck."

She then addressed Miss Girzie.

"And if it should be your gude-brother, Miss Girzie, really ye have much cause for thanksgiving, for the papers say he has left a power of money, over and forbye his great estates; and all goes to his only surviving child and daughter, Clara, 'ceps a jointure of three thousand pounds to his disconsolate leddy—My word, your sister has had her ain luck in this world! Little did either o' you think, in the days o' your worthy father's austerity, that a three thousand jointure would blithen her widowhood. But I doubt, Miss Girzie, ye'll no can expec her to domicile with the like of you, now when she's come to such a kingdom."

Miss Shoosie having in the meantime read the paragraph, handed the paper to her sister, as she said—

"Really, sister, it's very like the death of a baronet; but I see no legality that he was our sister's."

"What ye observe," interposed Mrs Soorocks, "is no without sense, Miss Shoosie; and surely, if ye're treated by Lady Chandos just with a contempt, it's no to be thought that ye'll put

more hypocrisy on your backs than ye hae in your bosoms. But, leddies, leddies, I see a jeopardie gathering over you. Miss Claurissie, your niece, she'll have doers; and though her mother, and her father, that the Lord has taken to himsell, scornt to molest you in this poor heritage o' Barenbraes, the doers will be constrained by law to do their duty as executioners—depend upon't, they will demand a restoration to the uttermost farthing. Maybe, and it's no unpossible, the doers may have heard of your narrow contracted ways, and may think the money cannot be in closer hands; but for all that, be none surprised if they come upon you like a judgment. But even should they no disturb you, as maybe Sir Rupert may in his will have so ordered it, to show how little he regarded the beggarly inheritance of your family, ye yet daurna wile away ae plack, the which is a sore misfortune, for I doubt not, considering how light the beggar's pock returns from your gates, that both o' you have a kind intention to give the parish a mortification. But come what may, put oil in your lamps, and be awake and ready, for it will fare ill with you if ye are found not only

helpless old maids, but foolish virgins, when the shouts of the bridegroom are heard—I mean, when your niece comes to be married; for it's very probable that she'll be the prey o' a spendthrift; and if such is the Lord's pleasure, think what will become of you then!"

Such for many years had been the circumstances and situation of the maiden sisters of Barenbraes: still they were unmolested by any inquiry from England, and still, as often as the various vocations of her neighbourliness permitted, they were as kindly reminded by Mrs Soorocks of the audit to which they were liable to be so suddenly summoned. Her idea, however, of counselling the Laird to pay his addresses to one of them, as an expedient to avert the consequences of his impending misfortunes, was not without a sufficient show of plausibility, although it might really seem to be only calculated to furnish herself with additional causes for the afflicting sympathy she took in their destinies, and to augment the pungency of her condolence.

At this period more than thirty years had elapsed since the elopement of Lady Chan-

dos, and still no intimation had been received, in any shape or form, tending to verify the predictions of Mrs Soorocks ; it was therefore not altogether improbable, that the martyrs of her anxiety might be permitted the quiet enjoyment of their possessions, at least so it appeared to me at the time ; and accordingly, having wished her all manner of success in her undertaking, I pursued my own course towards the Manse, while she posted on to Auldbiggings.

CHAPTER X.

Dr Lounlans was one of those modern ornaments of the Scottish Church, by whom her dignity, as shown in the conduct and intelligence of her ministers, is maintained as venerable in public opinion, as it was even when the covenanted nation, for the sake of their apostolic bravery and excellence, broke the iron arm both of the Roman and of the Episcopal Pharaoh. He was still a young man, being only in his thirty-third year; but patient study, and the gift of a discerning spirit, had enriched him with a wisdom almost equal in value to the precepts and knowledge of experience.

In his person, he affected somewhat more of attention to appearance than is commonly observable in the habits of country pastors, the effect of having had the good fortune to spend

several years as a tutor in a noble family, distinguished for their strict observance of those courtesies and etiquettes which characterised the aristocracy of the past age. His great superiority, however, consisted chiefly in the power of his eloquence, and the serene and graceful benignity of his manners, in which the calmness of philosophy and the meekness of piety were happily blended with the self-possession of worldly affability.

He had at this time been only eighteen months in the parish, and although the Manse, under his superintendance, had received many embellishments, yet traces of the ruder taste of his predecessor were still evident in the house, the offices, and the garden. Mr Firlots belonged indeed to another age and generation—he was one of those theological worthies who divided their sermons into fifteen heads, and planted in the same flower-bed cauliflowers and carnations. The pulpit became paralytic under his emphatic logomachies; and docks and nettles grew as rankly in all his borders, as epithets unpleasant to ears polite flourished in the mazes of his doxology. The docks and nettles, under

the auspices of his more refined successor, had now given place to roses and lilies. The pulpit was repaired, and the desk thereof beautified with a new covering; the weedy pathway to the Manse door was trimmed into a gravelled sweep edged with box, and alternate tassels of red and white daisies, interspersed with flowers of rarer name and richer blossom, adorned the bed within.

On entering the house, I was shown into the parlour, and obliged to wait some time before the reverend young Doctor made his appearance.

I have always thought that the sitting-room of a gentleman afforded no equivocal index to his character, and certainly the parlour of Dr Lounlans tended to confirm me in this notion. It was in all respects well-ordered—everything was suitable, but a degree of taste pervaded alike the distribution and the style of the furniture, producing something like fashionable elegance on the whole, notwithstanding the general Presbyterian simplicity of the details.

I observed some indications of preparation for a journey—a portmanteau with the key in the lock stood on one of the chairs, and near it on

another, lay several articles of apparel, with a pocket Bible in two volumes, very handsomely bound in purple morocco, and apparently quite new; indeed the paper, in which it would seem the volumes had been wrapped, lay on the floor.

When the Doctor came into the room, I could not but apologize for having intruded upon him; for although dressed with his habitual neatness, his complexion was flushed, and he had evidently been interrupted in some exertion of strength and labour.

"I am on the eve of going for some time from home," said he; "and the fatigue of packing obliged me to strip to the work."

Curiosity is the sin which most easily besets me, and this intimation of a journey, a journey, too, for which such packing and preparation were requisite, produced the natural consequence.

"You are, then, to be absent for some considerable time?" replied I.

"About three weeks, not longer."

"You do not, I hope, go soon?"

"This evening, that I may be in time for the earliest steam-boats from Greenock, in order

to overtake the mail at Glasgow, in which I have secured a place."

"But you might as well stop till the morning, for the Edinburgh mail will be gone before you can possibly arrive at Glasgow by the steamboats."

"It is the London mail in which my place is secured."

"You surprise me—No one has heard of your intention of going to London."

The Doctor smiled, and replied, a little, as I felt it, drily—he doubtless intended that it should be so felt,—

"Nor am I going so far as London;" he then added with his accustomed ease, "My journey is to Warwickshire, and I only take the mail to Carlisle."

To Warwickshire, thought I: What can he have to do in Warwickshire? It is very extraordinary that a Minister of the Kirk of Scotland should be going to Warwickshire. In a word, I was constrained to reply—

"I hope your journey, Doctor, is to bring home the only piece of furniture the Manse seems to want?"

He blushed a little and said, "You are not far wrong; the object of my journey is indeed to bring home a wife; but whether she will become a fixture in this house, is not yet determined."

"I regret to hear you say so: I had hoped you were among us for life.—I have not heard of your call. Is it to Glasgow or Edinburgh? Dr Chalmers is removed to St Andrews, and a new church is building in Edinburgh."

"If there be any call in my removal from this parish, I fear it may not be ascribed to the wonted inspiration which governs, as it is said, the translations of my brethren."

My curiosity was repressed by the cold propriety with which this was accentuated, and bethinking that the object of my visit was not to pry into the movements of the Doctor, but to procure his mediation with the Nabob, in behalf of our defenceless neighbour, the Laird—I accordingly said,—

"Dr Lounlans, I ask your pardon for the liberty I have taken; but in truth there is reason to lament your absence at this particular time, for your assistance is much wanted in a case

that requires a charitable heart and a persuasive tongue, both of which you eminently possess: Mr Mailings has fallen into some difficulties with Mr Rupees."

"I have heard," replied the Doctor, "something of it; he has incurred debts to him, and to a large amount."

"Even so; and the Nabob, as he is called, threatens to foreclose the mortgage."

"In what way can I serve the old man?"

This was said with a peculiar look, as if there was a movement of some reluctant feeling awakened in his memory.

"By representing to Mr Rupees," said I, "the harshness of the proceedings in which he has embarked, and in what manner the effects will injure his own reputation amongst us. Without giving the poor Laird the slightest notice of his intentions, he is already surveying and valuing the estate."

"Indeed, indeed," replied the Doctor, "that is severe; almost as much so, to one so old and helpless, as it is to turn the widow and the fatherless out of doors. I am grieved to hear of Mr Mailings' misfortune, but my business does

not admit of postponement. Did he request you to ask my interference?"

"I will be plain: he did not. I have heard something of the reason of his reluctance, but I am assured, from your character, that you will delight in returning good for evil."

"I cannot pay his debts," said the Doctor, after a short pause, "and Mr Rupees is not a man who will be persuaded to relent from his purpose by any other than the golden argument."

"Could you, however, try? He has but of late come among us, and is evidently ambitious of influence; you might represent to him the aversion which such indecent haste must universally provoke. He may yield to shame what he would refuse to virtue."

"Does the matter so press, that it may not stand over till my return?"

"So special a question, Doctor, I cannot answer; I am not acquainted with the actual state of the poor old gentleman's circumstances. It is only notorious that he is in the power of his creditors, and that the Nabob shows no disposition to mitigate the severity which the law perhaps enables him to inflict."

The Doctor appeared to be somewhat embarrassed; he looked upon the floor; he felt if his neckcloth was in proper order; he bit his left thumb, and gathered his brows into a knot, which indicated the predominancy of the earthy portion of his nature in the oscillations of his religion, his reason, and his heart.

I looked at him steadily,—but his eye was downcast, not shunning the inquisition of mine, but with that sort of fixedness which the outward organ assumes when the spirit looks inward. For some short space of time, it might be as long as it would take one to count a dozen, he remained thoughtful and austere. He then began to move his foot gently, and he glanced his eye aside towards me. There was sternness in the first glance, in the second the lustre of manly generosity, which in the third was dimmed with a christian's tear, and he covered his face with his hands, as he said with emotion,—"How true hath been my mother's prophecy! The cruel, selfish, arrogant man, whose all of worth lay in the earth and turf of his inheritance, has—I forget myself, no; he has not yet

supplicated the help of those in whose beggary he so exulted."

After a brief pause, and having wiped his eyes and forehead, he turned round to me and said, with a lighter tone,—

"I will postpone my journey for another day, and take a pledge in doing so from good fortune to provide me with a seat in the next mail. But I fear you overrate my influence with Mr Rupees—nevertheless, the task is one which I feel may not be omitted, and I will do my best endeavour to persuade him to pursue a course of mercy. There have been things, sir, which make this duty one hard to be undertaken; but, thank God, the sense of what my character as a minister of the Gospel requires, is livelier in motive, than the resentful remembrance of early affliction."

It was accordingly agreed that he should visit Mr Rupees in the morning, and I soon after took my leave.

CHAPTER XI.

After quitting the Manse, I returned towards the path by which I had crossed the fields in the morning. This course led me to pass the gate of Auldbiggings, on approaching which, I observed Jock sitting on one of the globes, which, some time during the last century, had surmounted the pillars of the gateway. He was busily employed in feeding a young hawk, which he held compressed between his left arm and his bosom.

At first I resolved to go by without speaking, my thoughts being engrossed with the retribution to which Dr Lounlans had alluded, but Jock himself, forgetful entirely of the ceremony which he endeavoured to practise when I met him on the Whinny Knowes, without rising or

even suspending his occupation, looked askance from under the brim of his hat, and bade me come to him. There was something in this over affectation of negligence which convinced me he was sitting at the gate not altogether at that time by accident, and I had indeed some reason to suspect that he had placed himself there on purpose to intercept me on my return home ; for presently he began to sift me with a curious sinister subtlety peculiar to himself.

"This is fine weather for a sober dauner," said he, as I went up to him. "And whare will ye walk in a path o' mair pleasantness, than the road atween your house and the Place ; no that I would misliken the way to the Manse, now and then, especially in the fall of the year, when the yellow leaf tells of our latter end, and the wind howls in the tree, like a burgher minister hallylooying about salvation."

"Upon my word, John, you spiritualize a walk to the Manse as ingeniously as the Doctor himself could do."

"Ah, isna Dr Lounlans a capital preacher ? —isna he a great gun ? He's the very Monsmeg o' the presbytery."

"And yet, John, I understand that the Laird has no particular esteem for the Doctor."

"Gentlemen are nae great judges o' preaching," said Jock; "it wouldna hae been fair o' Providence to hae allowt them both the blessings o' religion and the good things o' this world; and so the Laird being a true gentleman, by birth and breeding, is by course o' nature no a crowder o' kirks."

"But I should have expected that such a faithful servant as you are, John, would have been of the same way of thinking as your master."

"In temporalities, in temporalities—I'm a passive obedient; but in the controversy with the auld tyrant that is called Diabolus, a name which the weighty Doctor Drystoor says may be rendered into English by the word Belzebub, my soul is as a Cameronian, free upon the mountains, crying Ha, ha, to the armed men. But, sir, though I will allow that Dr Lounlans is in the poopit a bright and shining light, yet I hae my doots whether the mere man o' his nature hath undergone a right regeneration."

"Indeed! You do not call his piety in question?"

"No; but I dislike his pride. He has noo been the placed minister and present incumbent of our parish mair than a year and a half, and he has never paid his respeks at Auldbiggings. I'm sure if I were the Laird, I would ne'er do him the homage o' entering his kirk door—no, not even on a king's fast."

"John, there must be some reason for an exception so singular to the usual pastoral attentions which Dr Lounlans pays to all his parishioners. I have heard something o' the cause."

"Nae doot of that, for I see you are frae the Manse, and I'se warrant was treated there baith wi' toddy and jocosity, on account of our peradventure wi' John Angle's keeking wheels. It would be mother's milk to the Doctor—weel kens he, that there's no a claw the fifteen lords can put forth, the whilk Caption will leave unhandled to rive the flesh frae the Laird's banes. I'm speaking o' the Doctor in his capacity o' a mere man."

"Then, John, let me tell you, you are very

much mistaken. Dr Lounlans feels for the situation of your master as a gentleman and a Christian ought to do."

"As a Christian—as a Christian he may—But will he pacify the Nabob?"

It was plain from this incidental expression, that the cunning creature had been informed by his master of the object of my visit to the Manse, and that notwithstanding the repugnance shown by the old gentleman at the idea of being obliged to the Doctor, he was yet anxious to obtain his mediation. It may be in supposing such meanness I do him wrong, but that his servant had no scruples on the subject, was quite manifest; for in reply to my assurances that the Doctor was not only distressed by what had taken place, but had undertaken to interpose with Mr Rupees to avert litigation, and to suspend this annoying survey of the estate, which I the more particularly explained, in order that it might be reported to the Laird, he said—

"It would hae been an unco thing had he refus't it, for he has baith the spiritual motives of Christian duty and the carnal spite of upstart pride to egg him on;—but whether it be

the minister or the mere man that leads captive captivity—I'll sing wi' thankfulness,

Behold how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as children are,
In unity to dwell."

"But, John," said I, "what is the true cause of the animosity between the Laird and the Doctor? I cannot think that the rouping out of Mrs Lounlans, though a very harsh proceeding, could have occasioned feelings of such deep and durable resentment. There must have been some other cause."

"Cause, cause—there was nae cause at a'—If courting a young widow by lawful means be a cause, that was the cause—Ye see, the short and the lang o't is this, as no young gentleman's education can be properly finished till he has broken in on the ten commandements, the Laird, after the burial of John Lounlans, threw a sheep's e'e at the bonnie widow, as she was called, and thought to win her love by course o' law, for her gudeman died deep in his debt. But whereas is an ill-farr'd beginning to a billydoo

—so ye see, Mrs Lounlans, instead o' being won to amorous delights by multiplepoinding, grew demented, and taking the doctor minister, who was then a three-year auld bairn and orphan by the hand, she stood in the kirk-stile—the better day the better deed—it was on a Sabbath—and there she made sic a preaching and paternoster about a defenceless widow and fatherless babies, that when our Laird was seen coming to the kirk, soberly and decently, linking wi' his leddy mother, the weans in the crowd set up a shout—and he was torn frae her side, and harlt through mire and midden dub, to the great profanation of the Lord's-day, and the imminent danger of his precious life. For mair than a month he was thought beyont the power o' a graduwa, and his leddy mother, before the year was done, diet o' the tympathy or a broken heart. But how the Doctor should hate our Laird for that hobbleshaw, I ne'er could understand, for the Laird was the ill-used man."

Before I had time to make any comment on this affair, we were joined by the indefatigable Mrs Soorocks, returning from the Place. She did not appear, by the aspect of her counte-

nance, to have been so successful in her voluntary mission as I had been in mine; but I could nevertheless discover, that she had not altogether failed, and that she had something to tell; for immediately on coming up, she took me by the arm and was leading me away, when she happened to observe the work in which Jock was employed.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed, pausing and looking back at him, "no wonder poor feckless Auldbiggings is brought to a morsel—sic servants as he has! As I hae my een, the wasterfu' creature's feeding the bird wi' minched collops—worms are ower gude for't—and he's cramming them down its throat wi' his finger! For shame, ye cruel ne'erdoweel—ye'll choke the puir beast."

What answer Mrs Soorocks got for her meddling, it may not be fitting to place upon immortal record; but she observed, when she had recovered her complexion and countenance, as we were moving away, that Jock was a real curiosity, "He's just what Solomon would hae been wi' a want, for his proverbs and parables are most extraordinar?"

CHAPTER XII.

Mrs Soorocks' road homeward lying aside from the path across the fields, I was obliged in civility to accompany her along the highway, and to forego my intention of taking the more sequestered course, not that she probably would have scrupled to have gone with me in any direction I might have proposed, but the public road was the shortest way to her residence. When the tasks of politeness are not agreeable, it is judicious to abridge their duration—a philosophical maxim worthy of particular attention, whenever you undertake to see an afflicting old lady safely home.

When we had passed some twenty paces or so from the entrance to the avenue of Auldbiggings, my companion began to repeat the result of her mission, by complaining of the familiarity with

which the Laird allowed himself to be treated by his man.

"When I went into the room, there was the two," said she, "holding a controversy about your mediation wi' Dr Lounlans, and Jock was argle bargling wi' his master, like one having authority over him, the which to see and to hear was, to say the least o't, a most seditious example to the natural audacity of servants. It's true, that when Jock saw me he drew in his horns, for the creature's no without a sense o' discretion in its ain way, and left the chamber; but it's plain to me that yon is an ill-rulit household, and were it no a case of need-cessity and mercy, I dinna think I ought to hae the conscience to advise the leddies o' Barenbraes to hae onything to say till't."

"Then you have made some progress with the Laird?"

"I hae made an inceesion, but no to a great length; for what do you think is the auld fool's objection? He's in a doot if either o' the leddies be likely to bring him a posterity."

"A very grave and serious objection indeed; considering the motive by which you have been

so kindly actuated, it could not but surprise you."

"Surprise! na, I was confounded, and said to him, 'Mr Mailings,' quo' I, 'my purpose o' marriage for you, at your time o' life, and in your straitened circumstances, ought to hae something more rational in view than the thoughts of a posterity. But Miss Shoosie's no past the power o' a miracle even in that respeck; for Sarah ye ken was fourscore before she had wee Isaac, and the twa-and-fifty mystery o' the Douglas Cause, should teach you to hae some faith in the ability of Miss Girzie, who, to my certain knowledge, was only out of her forties last Januar, for I saw their genealogy in their big Bible. It was lying on the table when I called at Barenbraes on Sabbath, and neither o' the leddies being in the room, I just happened to observe that twa leaves at the beginning were pinned thegither, nae doot to hide some few o' the family secrets. Gude forgie me, I couldna but tak out the prin, and you may depend upon it, that Miss Girzie was just nine-and-forty last Januar. But I couldna advise him to hae

onything to say to Miss Girzie, and so I told him."

"What do you mean? I have never heard of aught to her prejudice—I have always indeed understood that she was the most amiable of the two."

"Nae great sang in her praise: but amiable here or amiable there, is no a thing to be thocht o', for it's no a marriage o' felicity that we're to speed, but a prudent marriage; and would it no be the height o' imprudence for a man to lay hands on the wally draig when he has it in his power to catch a better bird?"

"I do not exactly understand you, Mrs Soorocks, for if there is any superiority possessed by the one sister over the other, you allow that Miss Girzie has it."

"I alloo of no such thing—and were the Laird to marry her, what's to prevent some other needfu' gentleman (and when were they plentier?) frae making up to Miss Shoosie—she is the old sister, ye forget that—wouldna deil-be-lickit be the portion o' the younger couple?—No, no, if Auldbiggings is to marry any o' them,

it shall be Miss Shoosie. It would be a tempting o' Providence if he did otherwise."

"But, my dear madam, are you not proceeding a little too fast, in thus disposing of the leddies without consulting them—should you not ascertain how far either of them may be inclined to encourage the Laird's addresses?"

"What can it signify to consult them, if it be ordained that the marriage is to take place? But if I hadna seen the auld idiot so set upon a posterity, it was my intent and purpose to have gane ower to Barenbraes the morn's morning, and given Miss Shoosie an inkling of what was in store for her. But the matter's no ripe enough yet for that."

"The growth, however, has been abundantly rapid; and I am sure, Mrs Soorocks, whatever may be the upshot, that the whole business hitherto does equal credit to your zeal and intrepidity."

"It is our duty," replied the worthy lady, seriously, "to help ane anither in this howling wilderness; and noo may I speer what speed ye hae come wi' Doctor Lounlans? for Auldbiggings told me that he had debarred you from going

near him, the which, of course, could only serve to make you the mair in earnest wi' the wark. I'm shure a debarring would hae done so to me, though ye're no maybe the fittest person that might hae undertaken it. But weakly agents aften thrive in the management of great affairs, and if ye hae succeeded with the Doctor, I hope ye'll be sensible of the help that must have been with you—not that your task was either a hard or a heavy ane, for the Doctor is a past ordinar young man—but there's a way of conciliation very requisite on such occasions. Howsomever, no doot ye did your best—and I hope the Doctor has consented to pacify the Nabob."

"Whether he may be able to succeed, is perhaps doubtful," said I.

"And if he should fail," cried the lady, interrupting me; "I'll then try what I can do mysell; in the meantime, it's a comfort to think he has promised, for really the circumstance o' poor Auldbiggings requires a helping hand;—weel indeed may I call him poor, for it's my opinion he hasna ae bawbee left to rub upon anither."

"But the promise," said I, "was given under

circumstances which makes it doubly valuable. You are probably aware, though I had not heard of it before, that the Doctor is on the eve of marriage?"

"Going to be married, and none of his parish ever to have heard a word about it! I think it's a very clandestine-like thing o' him—and whare is he going, and wha's he to marry? She canna be a woman o' a solid principle, to be woo'd and won, as it were, under the clouds o' the night."

"The Doctor and the lady, madam, I am persuaded, have been long acquainted."

"I dinna doot that, and intimately too," replied Mrs Soorocks, insinuatingly. "But whatna corner o' the earth is he bringing her frae? We'll a' be scrupulous about her till we ken what she is."

"I do not question the prudence of the parish in that respect; but if I understood him right, she resides in Warwickshire."

"In Warwickshire!—that's a heathenish part o' England. And so Madam o' the Manse to be, is an Englishwoman, and of course o' a light morality, especially for a minister's wife.—She'll be a calamity to the neighbourhood, for

it will be seen that she'll bring English servant lasses among us to make apple-pies and wash the door-steps on the Lord's-day, as I am creditably told a' the English do. But did ye say Warwickshire? Lady Chandos and her dochter, the heiress by right o' Barenbraes—they live in Warwickshire; oughtna we to get her sisters, the leddies, to open a correspondence wi' her concerning the minister's prelatical bride—for she canna be otherwise than o' the delusion o' the English liturgy and prelacy; and if neither o' them will write, I'll write mysell, for it's a duty incumbent on us all to search into the hiddenness of this ministerial mystery. Warwickshire! I canna away wi't—the very sound o't flew through the open o' my head like a vapour—weel indeed may I say that it's a mystery, for noo when I think o't, the vera first time that Doctor Lounlans drank his tea wi' me—it was the afternoon o' the third day after his placing—he speer't in a most particular manner about the leddies of Barenbraes, and how it came to pass that they keepit no intercourse by correspondence wi' Lady Chandos. But is't no wonderfu' that I never thought, then nor since syne,

o' speering at him about what he ken't o' her leddyship?—surely I hae been bewitched, and mine eyes blinded with glamour, for I sat listening to him like an innocent lamb hearkening to the shepherd's whistle. But I hae always thought there was a providence in that marriage of Lady Chandos, for she was an excellent and sweet lassie, and now it has come to pass that she may be a mean to guard her native land, and her heritage too, against the consequence of the manifest indiscretion o' Dr Lounlans' never-to-be-heard-tell-o' connexion."

During this harangue, I endeavoured several times to arrest the progress of the good lady's suspicion and the growth of her conviction, that the Doctor's marriage must be in some way derogatory to his character and pestilent to his parish, but it was all in vain; my arguments only rivetted her opinion more and more, until wearied with the controversy I bade her adieu, ungallantly leaving her to find the path to Barenbraes alone, whither she determined forthwith to proceed, "before it might be too late."

CHAPTER XIII.

ALTHOUGH I did not expect to see Dr Lounlans until after his interview with the Nabob, nor was under any apprehension of a visitation from Mrs Soorocks, and had predetermined not to call on the Laird without being able to carry with me some consolatory tidings, I yet rose an hour earlier than usual next morning, and felt very much as those feel who have many purposes to perform.

This particular activity was ingeniously accounted for by Mr Tansie, the parish schoolmaster, who in passing by happened to observe me at breakfast an hour before my accustomed time; and the parlour window being open that I might enjoy the fragrance of the sweetbriar which grows beneath it, he came forward and complimented me on the good health which

such solacious participation in the influences of the season, as he called it, assuredly indicated.

The worthy dominie was generally known among us as the philo, a title bestowed on him by one of his own pupils, and which, not inaptly, described about as much of the philosophical character as he really possessed.—I was no stranger to his peculiar notions, for we have often had many arguments together, and in reply to his observation on the source of my enjoyment of a spring morning, I said, after telling him something of what was impending over the Laird, "But whether the impulses of activity by which I am so unwontedly stirred, arise from any benevolent desire to lighten the misfortunes of the old gentleman, or come from the spirit of the vernal season, it would not be easy to determine."

"Not at all," said he, "they are emanations of the same genial power, which prompteth unvocable as well as intelligent nature to bloom and rejoice in the spring. It were easier indeed to explain the motives of the breast, by considering the signs of the zodiac under which each propelleth action, than by the help and means

of metaphysical philosophy.—Are not all things around us luxuriating in the blandishments of the spring? the buds are expanding, the trees are holding out their blossomy hands to welcome the coming on of abundance, juvenility is leaping forth with a bound and a cheer—and there is gladness and singing, and the sound of a great joy throughout the whole earth; universal nature overflows with kindness, and therefore the heart of man is melted to charity and love. The germinative influences of Taurus and Gemini are now mingled, and good deeds and pleasant doings among men have their seasonable signs in the green fields, the musical bowers, and the promises of the rising corn."

"You explain to me, Mr Tansie, what I never before rightly understood; namely, why primroses and public dinners come into season together, and how it happened that lamb and eleemosynary subscriptions at the same time adorn the tavern altars of charity; but now I see how it is, they are all the progeny of the same solar instincts."

"Can you doubt it? why in summer are we less active?—Do not the feelings of the heart

then like the brooks run low and small?—no fruit tempteth the hand to gathor—the heat is too great for hard labour, and the bosom wills to no action; while we lighten the burden of our own raiment, who, beneath the dazzle of a burning noon, would think for merciful pity of clothing the nude and those who are needful of drapery?"

"But how does it come to pass in autumn, Mr Tansie, when Nature may be said to stand invitingly by the way side, holding out her apron filled with all manner of good things, that man is then of a churlish humour, and delights in the destruction of innocent life?"

"It is indeed," replied the dominie, "a marvellous contrariety: but the sign of the scrupulous balance is a token of the disposition of the genius of the season—were we not moved by its avaricious influence, should we so toil to fill the garnels of gregarious winter?"

"Then, according to your doctrine, Mr Tansie, it must be fortunate for the Laird that his rupture with the Nabob has not happened under the aspect of Libra, and there may be some

chance at this genial season of Dr Lounlans succeeding in his meditation ?"

" Therein, sir, you but show how slightly you have examined the abysms of that true astrology. Though the time serves, and all humane sympathies are at present disposed to cherish and to give confidence, yet are there things on which the sweet influences of the spring shed bale and woe, for the energy which it awakeneth on the doddard and the old, is as a vigour put forth in age and infirmity, causing weakness while it seemeth to strengthen. Mr Mailings is of those whose berth and office have become as it were rubbish in the highway of events. The day of the removal cannot be afar off——"

In this crisis of our conversation, and while Mr Tansie was thus expounding his philosophy, leaning over the sweetbriar with his arms resting on the sill of the window, on which he had spread his handkerchief to save the sleeves of his coat, I saw Mrs Soorocks coming across the fields. That some special cause had moved her to be abroad so early admitted of no doubt,— but whether her visit should relate to the minister's marriage, or to the misfortunes of our

neighbour, it gave me pleasure at the moment, for the imagination of the ingenious dominie was mounted in its cloudy car, and so mending its speed, that I began to feel a growing inclination to follow in the misty voyage, notwithstanding my long-determined resolution never to engage in any sort of ratiocination in the forenoon,—a space of the day, however well calculated for special pleading, particularly unsuitable for theoretical disquisition, as every lawyer and legislator must have often remarked.

On hearing the indefatigable lady's steps, the dominie rose from his inclined position, and gathering up his handkerchief from the sill of the window, replaced it in his pocket; but she had more serious business in hand than afforded time for any sort of talk with him. She came straight up to the door, and announced herself by knock and ring, without appearing to notice him, though he stood with his hat off, and was ready to do her all proper homage.

While the servant admitted her, the dominie turned round again to the window, and said to me, before there was time to show her into the parlour,—

"She hath had an incubus;" and placing his hat somewhat tartly—doubtless displeased that she should have passed him unnoticed—he immediately retired, evidently piqued at being so slightingly considered, forgetting entirely the immeasurable difference of rank between the relict of a laird of a house with a single lum, herself the co-heiress of, what Gilbert Stuart calls, the harvest of half a sheaf, and a modest and learned man, on whose originality and worth the world's negligence had allowed a few cobwebs—the reveries of solitary rumination—to hang with impunity—more to the dishonour of those who observed them, than to the deterioration of the material with which they were connected. I saw the good man's mortification, and, although almost as eager to hear what the lady had to tell as she herself was evidently anxious to communicate, I started abruptly from my chair, and, going hastily to the door, cried out, "Show Mrs Soorocks into the library, and I shall be with her immediately."

"No ceremony wi' me—I'm no a ceremonious woman, as you may well know," was the answer I received, and, in the same moment,

brushing past the servant at the door, she came into the room, and, looking me steadily in the face for the space of some four or five seconds, portentously shook her head, and, unrequested, walking to an elbow-chair, seated herself in it emphatically, with a sigh.

I have never felt much alarm from any demonstration of that inordinate dread which Mrs Soorocks, and her numerous kith and kin in the general world, and in our particular environs and vicinity, are in the habit of displaying, on occasions which do not at all concern themselves; but the threefold case of anxiety created by the Laird's misfortunes, the minister's marriage, and the intended co-operation with Providence to raise up a husband for one of the spinsters of Barenbraes, presented a claim to attention which I could not but at once both admit and acknowledge, by inquiring, in the most sympathetic manner, what had happened to discompose her?

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Mrs Soorocks had fanned herself with her handkerchief, and had some four or five times during the operation puffed her breath with a sough somewhat between the sound of a blast and a sigh, she looked for her pocket-hole, replaced the handkerchief in its proper depositary, then stroking down her petticoat, and settling herself into order, thus began:

"It's a great misfortune to be of a Christian nature, for it makes us sharers in a' the ills that befall our frien's. I'm sure, for my part, had I broken Mr Rupees' head with my own nieve, and crushed Angle the land-surveyor's commodity in the hollow of my hand, I could not hae suffert more anxiety than I do in the way o' sympathy at this present time, on account o' the enormities of the law, which Caption, the ettercap, is mustering, like an host for battle,

against our poor auld doited and defenceless neighbour. But a' that is nothing to the vexation I'm obliged to endure frae the contumacity o' yon twa wizzent and gaizent penure pigs o' Barenbraes."

"You have perhaps yourself, madam, to blame a little for that; you need not, I should think, meddle quite so much in their concerns."

"But I cannot help it—it's my duty. I find myself as it were constrained by a sense of grace to do what I do. Far, indeed, it is frae my heart and inclination to scald my lips in other folks' kail,—and why should I? Is there any homage frae the warld as my reward? Let your own hearts answer that. And as for gratitude frae those I sae toil to serve, the huff o' Miss Shoosie Minnygaff is a vera gracious speciment."

From the tenor of these observations, and particularly from the manner in which they were uttered, I began to divine that the worthy lady had not been altogether so successful in her matrimonial project with the maiden sisters as she had been with Auldbiggings, and I expressed my regret accordingly.

"Deed," replied she, "ye were ne'er farther

wrang in your life, great as your errors both in precept and in practice may hae been. But no to mind an ill-speaking world on that head, what would ye think I hae gotten for my pains frae the twa, Hunger and Starvation, as I canna but call them?"

"It is impossible for me to imagine—they are strange creatures; I should be none surprised if they were unreasonable in their expectations as to the jointure which Auldbiggings may be able to afford; poor man, I fear he has nothing in his power."

"Guess again, and, if ye hope to succeed, guess an impossibility."

"Pin money."

"Pin snuffy! They too hae their doubts if the Laird will connive at a right way o' education for their children! Did ye ever hear the like o' that? And wha do you think the objection first came frae? Miss Shoosie—auld Miss Shoosie; the sight o' her wi' a child in her arms would be like a lang-necket heron wi' a lamb in it's neb, or a Kitty Langlegs dan'ling a bumbee;—the thing's an utter incapability o' nature, and so I said to her."

"That explains her ingratitude. I certainly, my dear Mrs Soorocks, cannot approve of throwing cold water on her hopes of a posterity, especially as the only objection which the Laird made to the ladies, was an apprehension of disappointment in that respect."

"Sir, the thing is no to be dooted; but I should tell you her speech o' folly on the occasion. 'To be sure, sister,' said she, speaking to Miss Girzie, when I had broken the ice, 'Mr Mailings is a man o' family; and though in his younger years he did marry below his degree, yet noo that his wife is dead, she can never be a blot in a second marriage. But then he's a most stiff-neckit man in the way of opinion, and I doot, if ever him and me were married, that we would agree about the way o' bringing up our children; for if I were to hae a dochter,' quo' she, 'and wha knows if ever I shall'—I could thole this no longer," exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, "and so, as plainly as I was pleasant, I said, 'Everybody kens weel aneugh, Miss Shoosie, that ye'll never hae a dochter.' And what think you got I for telling her the true even-doun fact?"

"Probably whatever she had in her hand."

"O, ye're a saterical man!—to judicate that leddies would be flinging housholdry at ane anither's heads! But she did far waur. I never beheld such a phantasie. She rose from her chair, her een like as they would hae kindled candles, though her mouth was as mim as a May puddock, and crossing her fingers daintily on her busk, she made me a ceremonious curtsey, like a maid of honour dancing a minaway wi' the lord-chancellor, and said, 'Mrs Soorocks, I thank you.' I was so provoked by her solemnity, that I could na but make an observe on't, saying, 'Heeh, sirs, Miss Shoosie, it must be a great while since ye were at a practeesing, for really ye're very stiff in the joints. I hae lang kent ye were auld, but I didna think you were sae aged. I canna, therefore, be surprised at your loss o' temper; for when folks lose their teeth, we needna look for meikle temper amang them; the which causes me to understand what Mr Mailings meant when he said, that between defects and infirmities ye were a woman past bearing. But, Miss Shoosie, no to exasperate you beyond what is needful in the way o' chastisement, ye'll just

sit doun in your chair and compose yourself, for ye'll no mak your plack a bawbee in striving wi' me in satericals, the more especially as, by what I hae seen o' your dispositions this day, I canna marvel at your being rejected o' men—na, but rue wi' a contrite spirit that I should ever hae been so far left to mysell, as to even sic a weak veshel to a gentleman of good account—as they say in the babes in the wood—like that most excellent man, Mr Mailings, who, if he were to lift the like o' you wi' a pair o' tangs, ye might account yourself honoured; and yet I was proposing him for a purpose o' marriage! But, Miss Shoosie, I'll be merciful, and treat you wi' the compashion that is due to a sinful creature;' and then I kittled her curiosity concerning the minister's marriage wi' a leddy in Warwickshire; so ye see she's no a match for me, as I could make her know, feel, and understand, but for the restraining hand o' grace that is upon me."

"On the topic of Dr Lounlans' marriage, Mrs Soorocks,—how did you handle that?"

"Weel may ye speer, and the gude forgie me if I wasna tempted to dunkle the side o' truth—

for I said, Leddies, what I hae been saying about the sheep's ee that the Laird would be casting at you, is a matter for deep consideration. Be nane surprist if ye hear o' very extraordinar news frae Warwickshire. I'll no venture to guess what's coming out o' that country; but I hae had a dream and a vision of a fair lady dressed in bridal attire—look you to what blood's in her veins."

"How, Mrs Soorocks! did you say that the Doctor is going to marry their niece?"

"I said nae sic a thing,—and I request that ye'll cleck no scandal wi' me;—but, knowing what I do know, and that's what you yoursell taught me, could I omit a seasonable opportunity for touching them on the part of soreness, in the way of letting them know that riches make to themselves wings and flee away to the uttermost ends of the earth? 'Be none astounded,' said I, 'leddies, if ye look forth some morning from your casements, and behold all your hainings and gatherings, your pinchings, your priggings, your counts and reckonings, fleeing away to Warwickshire, like ravens and crows,

and other fowls o' uncanny feather, or maybe the avenger, in the shape of a sound young minister of the Gospel o' peace, coming to herry you out o' house and home.'"

"But, my good madam, how can you reconcile all these inuendoes with that strict regard to truth which you so very properly on most occasions profess?—These unhappy ladies cannot but imagine that Dr Lounlans is going to marry their niece, a circumstance which you have not had from me the slightest reason to imagine."

"Is't a thing impossible?" cried Mrs Soorocks; "answer me that; and if it's no impossible, why may it not be? I'm sure Providence couldna gie a finer moral lesson than by making it come to pass."

"Am I to understand, then, from all this, that there is no great likelihood of Mr Mailings being extricated from his difficulties by marriage with either of the sisters?"

"It's no yet to be looked upon as a case o' desperation, for, handlet wi' discretion, I think the weakness on both sides concerning the education o' their posterity—really the very words

would provoke a saint—but, as I was saying, if we can overcome that weakness, a change may be brought about."

"But, my dear madam, is there no other among our friends and neighbours whom you might propose to the Laird? Considering the precarious situation of the ladies of Barenbraes, there is some risk, you know, of his condition being made much worse, should a demand for restitution come upon them. I have been much struck, Mrs Soorocks, with the kind interest which you take in the old gentleman's affairs, might I suggest——"

"Would ye even me to him?" cried the lady, raising her hands and throwing herself back in her chair; "and do you think that I would ever submit to be a sacrifice on the altar o' poverty for a peace-offering to the creditors of Auldbiggings—No: gude be thankit, and my marriage articles, I'm no just sae forlorn. It's vera true that, in the way of neighbourliness, I hae a great regard for Mr Mailings, and that the twa innocent auld damsels are far-off connexions of mine, with whom I hae lived on the best o' terms; but regard's no affection, and con-

nexions are neither flesh nor blood; moreover, there's an unco odds atween doing a service and becoming a slave, as the blithe days that I spent with my dear deceased husband have well instructed me to know; I own we had our differences like other happy couples—for Mr Soorocks had a particular temper—but knowing what I know, it would be a temptation indeed that would bribe me to ware my widowhood on another man, especially one of an ineffectual character, like the helpless bodie that's sae driven to the wall."

At this crisis of our conversation we were interrupted by one of the Nabob's servants, with a note, requesting, in the most urgent manner, to see me. However ill-timed, as Mrs Soorocks said it was, I was yet glad at the message, and indeed feigned more alacrity than I felt in obeying it, and in wishing her good morning.

CHAPTER XV.

It was a sunny and a hot, rather than a sultry day, when I approached Nawaubpore, the newly-erected mansion of the Nabob—around which, everything displayed the wealth and taste of the owner.

The lodges at the gate were built in the style of pagodas. It was intended that they should represent the grand Taj or Targe of Agra; but some of those defects inherent in all copies, made them, in many respects, essentially different from their model; the minarets performing the functions of chimneys, and the cupolas those of dove-cots: the gate itself was a closer imitation of the Fakeir-gate of Delhi.

The avenue from this gorgeous Durwaja consisted of two rows of newly-transplanted lime-trees, shorn of their tops and branches, each

bound with straw ropes, and propp'd by three-fork'd sticks, to keep them in a perpendicular position, until their truncated roots, as the botanists express it, should have again fastened themselves in the earth. In the park, groups of trees were placed similarly circumstanced, protected from the inroads of the cattle by palisades of split Scotch fir, connected by new rough-sawn rafters of the same material. In the distance, notwithstanding the metamorphoses which the moss had undergone, I recognized my old acquaintances,—the venerable ash-trees, which had surrounded and overshadowed the ancestral cottage of the Burrah Sahib, now serving as a skreen to a riding-house, framed of timber, and tinted with a mixture of tar and ochre into a mullagatawny complexion.

The court of offices occupied the fore-ground between the Hippodrome and the Burrah ghur. They were in the purest style of classic architecture. Whether the plan was suggested to the Nabob by that delicate discrimination, and that exquisite feeling of propriety in art, for which Mr. Threeper of Athens, his legal adviser, is so justly celebrated, or was procured for him by

his maternal relative, a prosperous gentleman, Archibald Thrum, Esq. of Yarns, and manufacturer in Glasgow, from the Palladio of the northern Venice, I have never been able satisfactorily to ascertain; but the pile was worthy alike of this Venice, and of that Athens, for in looking in at the gate, a copy of the triumphal Arch of Constantine, you beheld the cows tied to Corinthian pillars, looking out of Venetian windows.

The Burrah ghur, or mansion of the Burrah Sahib, was a splendid compilation of whatever has been deemed elegant in antique, curious in Gothic, or gorgeous in Oriental architecture. It was a volume of Elegant Extracts, a bouquet of the art as rich and various as those hospitable hecatomes of the cities on the banks of Clutha, amidst which, according to the veracious descriptions of Dr Peter Morris of Aberystwith, the haggis and blancmange are seen shuddering at each other. There a young artist might have nourished his genius with a greater variety of styles and combinations than the grand tour, with an excursion to Greece and Stamboul, could have supplied. Instead of a knocker or bell,

a gong of the Celestial Empire hung in a niche within the verandah, at the sound of which, the folding doors

——" self open'd,
On golden hinges turning."——

On entering the vestibule, a Kidmutgar, who was squatted on his hams in a corner on a mat, rose to receive me; he placed his palms together, touching his forehead three times with his thumbs, bowed to the ground, and then standing upright, pronounced in a voice of homage, "Salaam Sahib."

He was habited in a kind of shirt of blue cloth, with long open sleeves, and bound round the loins with a blue and yellow rope. On his head he wore a turban shaped like a puddock-stool, and trimmed with yellow cloth and gold lace. His wide silk drawers hung down to the ground, and his slippers, embroidered with silver, looked up in the toes, like other vain things in the pride of splendour.

I inquired for his master, and with a second salutation as solemn as the first, he replied, "Hah Sahib," and showed me into a room, one entire

end of which was occupied with a picture representing a tiger hunt, in the fore-ground of which, seated on the back of an elephant, I discovered a juvenile likeness of Mr Rupees, and in the back-ground an enormous tiger almost as big as a Kilkenny cat, was returning into the jungle with a delicate and dandyish officer of the governor's guard in his mouth.

When I had some time admired this historical limning, another Oriental conducted me to the library door, where, taking off his slippers, he ushered me into the presence of the Burrah Sahib. The room was darkened according to the Indian dhustoor, and from the upper-end, by the bubbling of a hookah, I was apprized that there the revelation was to take place.

On approaching the shrine I beheld the Vishnu of Nawaubpore, garmented in a jacket, waistcoat, and trowsers, of white muslin, with nankeen shoes—his head was bald to the crown, but the most was made of what little grey hair remained on his temples by combing it out; that which covered the back of his head was tied in a long slender tapering tail. He lolled in an elbow-chair, his feet supported on the back of

another, before which stood his Punkah wallah, cooling his lower regions with a gigantic palm-leaf fan, while the Hookah-burdhar was trimming the seerpoos in the rear.

On hearing me announced, the Nabob started to his feet, and shook me in the most cordial manner by the hand—thanked me for my alacrity in attending his summons, and 'before tiffin,' proposed to conduct me in person through his ghur, modestly intimating that he did not expect me altogether to approve of the prodigality of his tradesmen, at the same time insinuating that, for himself, he was a man of plain habits, and particularly fond of old-fashioned simplicity.

CHAPTER XVI.

Having perambulated the magnificent intricacies and chambers of Nawaubpore, praising, of course, to the utmost, all I saw, for which may God forgive me—but this is an age much addicted to hypocrisy, and the purest minds are necessarily tainted by the spirit of the times.

Carving and gilding everywhere appeared in such profusion that no room was left for taste. The furniture was numerous, cumbrous, and excessive, and interspersed with it, above, below, and all around, lay a miscellaneous assemblage of splendid nicknackery, like those relics and remnants of curiosities which remain in the hands of an auctioneer after he has disposed of whatever is valuable or really curious in the executor-ordered sale of a virtuoso's collection. Pictures by such artists as Zoffani covered the

walls, purchased, however, at Tulloh's sale-room in Calcutta, at a price which, if told to Mr Peele, would make him chuckle at the bargain he got of the Chapeau Paille—Derbyshire spar vases, plaster busts, French clocks, interestingly ornamental, but deranged in their horal faculties; Dresden china swains and shepherdesses; models, by Hindoo artists, of gates and pagodas; two verd antique pillars on casters in the dining-room, atoned for supporting nothing, by being hollow, and containing within post-cænobitical utensils; feather fans, Pekin Mandarins, Flemish brooms, musical snuff-boxes, large china jars, japanned cabinets, spacious mirrors, and icicled lustres—all so disposed as to produce the utmost quantum of confusion, with the least possible contribution to comfort.

Tiffin was served in the breakfast-room. It consisted of cold meats, hot curries, mullagatawney soup, kabobs, pillaws, and a fowl fried with onions to a cinder, bearing the brave name of country captain; ale (Hodson's of course), claret, genuine from the vaults of Carbonelle, and the far-famed Madeira, so fatal to the poor Laird, and which, according to his account,

had been sixteen years in a wood in the bay of Bengal.

Our conversation in the meantime was various and desultory, so much so that I began to wonder for what purpose my presence had been so urgently requested at Nawaubpore, and for what object I was treated with such distinguished consideration, till I happened to fill myself a glass of Madeira, while partaking of the currie.

"My good friend," said the Nabob, in a tone of alarm, placing his hand on my arm to restrain me, "do you mean to make a suttee of yourself? but I need not be surprised at you doing such a thing, for I have seen a candidate for the Direction, and a successful one too, do the very same thing—Need we wonder at the blunders in the government of India, when we meet with such ignorance of Indian affairs among the ghuddahs of Leadenhall-street? The Paugul was a Cockney banker—do you know he was so absurd as to ask me across the table—it was in the London Tavern—his Majesty's ministers were present—whether the Coolies carried the Dhoolies, or the Dhoolies the Coolies! One of

the ministers looked significantly at me, and said that he believed it was a doubtful question; but another, who sat next me, whispered, that if, like the Court of Directors, they got on in any way, it mattered little which was beast and which burden. By the by, it was on the same occasion that the pious member of the Durbah stated, and to me too, the singular progress and great fruits which had blessed the labours of the Missionaries in the East. 'D—n the blessing,' said I—I begged his lordship's pardon for the damn—'they have only taught a dozen or too parish soors to eat beef, and drink as much rum as they can steal.'—'That, however,' said another minister, whom I observed particularly attentive to my remark, 'that, however, is a step in the progress of wants;' and he added, 'having once acquired a desire for beef and rum, their industry will thence be stimulated to obtain these luxuries, and a superior morality will be gradually evolved by the consequent cultivation of industry.'—'The stealing of which you speak, is something like the turbidness of fermentation, a natural and necessary stage in the process of re-

finement, which will produce wine or vinegar, as the case may be,' replied I; upon which another of them interposed mildly, saying,—'I am quite sure that by the late reduction of the duty on wine, a reduction in the consumption of ardent spirits must supervene, and that the change will be salutary to the best interests of our Indian population.'"

By this time the Nabob had bestowed so much of his tediousness upon me, that I here attempted to break the thread of his discourse; but although I did so with all my wonted address, he was on a subject congenial to the Indian temperament—the sayings and doings of great men—and he would not be interrupted, for without noticing my impatience, which he ought to have done, he continued—

"There was another Peshwa, who had particular views of his own, for what he called the amelioration of Indian society; the principle of his plan was by a transfusion of a portion of the redundant piety of the United Kingdom into what he called the arterial ramifications of Oriental mythology——"

At this crisis one of the servants entered

with the customary salaam, and said something in his own language to the Burrah Sahib, who answered him abruptly—"Hemera bhot bhot salaam do doosera kummera recdo bolo;" and turning to me, he added, "Padre Lounlans sent a chit this morning, to say he would call on me about the affairs of that d—d sirdar Paugul the Laird, and I wish to consult you before seeing him. The murderous old decoit and his Junglewallah of a servant, while I was only ascertaining whether or not he had cheated me in the extent of his estate, on which I, like a fool, have advanced twice as much money as I dare say it is worth, charged upon me like a brace of Mahrattas, and with a lump of a lattee smashed my surveyor's theodolite. Mr Caption, my vakeel, is ready to take his oath before a magistrate, (if he has not done it already,) that they were guilty of assault and battery; against the laws of this and every other well-governed realm; inasmuch as, on the 19th of the present month of June, or on some day or night of that month, or on some day or night of the month of May preceding, or of July following, they did, with malice aforethought,

thump, beat, batter, bruise, smash, break, and otherwise inflict grievous bodily injury on one theodolite—But not to waste our time now on the law of the case, I have no doubt that the Padre is sent to negotiate a treaty. Now, do you think that where a Rajah has an undisputable right to a Zemendary, and the Kilhdar resists his authority in the persons of his army and artillery, (I mean Caption, Angle, and his theodolite,) the Rajah ought not to tuck him up, as was done at Faluari in the business of the Deccan?—By the by, the delay in the payment of the Deccan prize-money is too bad; had my friend old Frank suspected such proceedings, he would have made a drum-head division of the loot. I remember when I was attached to the Residency at Rumbledroog, about thirty years ago, that a detachment under the command of my friend Jack Smith, stormed a hill fort where he found considerable treasure; so he told the paymaster to make out a scale, and all the coined money was first divided, and then the bullion and jewels were weighed and measured out. Jack got two quarts of rings, which were picked off by the drum-boys from the toes of the ladies

of the Zenana in the glorious moment of victory; but the d—d lootwallah of a paymaster slyly cribbed a large diamond, which immediately touched him I suppose with the liver complaint, for he soon after gave in his resignation on that pretext, and sailed for Europe. On reaching London, he went immediately into Parliament, and has ever since been presiding at missionary meetings and Bible societies, and be d——d to him!"

At this pause I interposed and reminded the Nabob that Dr Lounlans was waiting.

"True, true," said he, "I had forgotten him; but old stories, and anything like fraud or oppression, make me forget myself, and neglect my own affairs. Had it not been for the warmth and generosity of my feelings in that way when I was at—devil take it, I am at it again—let us go at once and hear what the Padre has got to say."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Nabob bustled on before me to the room where Dr Lounlans was waiting, and, leaving me to follow, went forward and received the reverend gentleman with a hearty jocular urbanity.

"Warm weather, Doctor, this," said he; "never felt the heat more oppressive in Bengal, except a day or two during the hot winds, but even there you can keep it out by means of tatties, you know. Here, in Europe, we are still very far behind. Houses are very good for winter and wet weather, not at all adapted for the summer climate; but when I have once got Nawaubpore in proper order, I'll make my own climate, as the Nawaub of Lucknow told Lord Wellesley—I'll have a subterranean parlour for the hot season. But hadn't you better take some sherbet, or a glass of sangaree, after

your walk? My aubdaar will cool it for you, with a whole seer of saltpetre: for my ice-house has gone wrong, you know, by the mason leading the drain of the wash-house through it, like a d—d old fool as he was.—I beg your pardon, Doctor——"

Dr Lounlans had evidently prepared himself for the interview: his manner was dry, cold, and almost repulsive, as he said, "No offence to me," dwelling emphatically on the last word, and adding—

"The business, Mr Rupees, which has induced me to postpone a journey until I could see yourself, is very urgent, and I hope it is convenient to let me proceed with it."

The Nabob was somewhat taken aback at the abruptness of this commencement; but, significantly winking to me, requested the Doctor to be seated; and, throwing himself down on a sofa, he lifted up one of his legs upon it, and said, "I am all attention, Doctor."

Prepared as the young pastor was for his undertaking, this nonchalance somewhat disconcerted him, but he soon recovered his self-possession, and replied,

"When I came into this parish, I understood that Mr Mailings, your neighbour, was one of your most particular friends."

"Well, and what of that?"

"And now I understand," resumed the minister, "that without any fault on his side, but only the misfortune of having borrowed your money, you have instituted proceedings against him of unusual severity."

"Well, and what then?" responded the Nabob, winking at me.

"Such rigour, in such a case," replied the Doctor, "cannot, Mr Rupees, have proceeded from the dictates of your own feelings, but must be the effect of advice, in which your long absence from the usages of your native land has been employed as much to the disparagement of the goodness of your own heart, as to the prejudice of the solitary old man, your unfortunate debtor."

The Nabob, putting down his foot, and assuming an erect posture, looked a little more respectfully towards the Doctor, as he said with cordiality—

"I suppose, Doctor, you think that the peo-

ple of India are less liberal than those of Europe, but they are a d—d sight more so—I beg your pardon, Doctor. For myself, I never pretended to be a philanthropist, but I have often given fifty gold mohurs to an officer's widow, when people of the same rank in Europe would have thought a guinea prodigal. In this very case, did not I lend the old Guddah £3000 at 4 per cent, when consols were at 73, and when I might have had ten in Calcutta from my friend David, bear as he is?"

"Your kindness in that respect, certainly," replied Doctor Lounlans, "is not to be disputed; but to exact a repayment at this particular time, is turning your former favour into a misfortune."

"Who says so?" exclaimed the Nabob, resuming his recumbent posture on the sofa; "I have not yet asked for my money, though the last half year's interest has not been paid."

"Then you are unjustly suffering in public opinion, for it is universally reported that you have given instructions to your man of business to demand repayment, and in the event of refusal—the poor debtor must of necessity re-

fuse—it is also reported, that you have ordered every measure of law to bring his estate to sale at this time, when it is morally certain that it will not sell for half its worth."

"Dr Lounlans," said the Nabob, looking loungingly over his shoulder, and then winking at me,

—"The worth of any thing
Is just whatever it will bring."

The Doctor turned to me with dismay in his countenance. He was conscious that argument could make no impression, and apprehensive that entreaty would prove equally ineffectual; but nevertheless he again addressed the Nabob, in a firmer tone, however, than he had hitherto employed—

"Sir, such proceedings are not in unison with the feelings of this country. Mr Mailings is the representative of an ancient family; the habits and affections of the people of Scotland are still strongly disposed to take the part of a man of his condition when he suffers from oppression."

"They were," replied the Nabob, drily; "but

now, I suspect, they are quite as well disposed to esteem those who, by their own merits, have made their own fortunes, and have brought home from other countries the means of improving their native land. I have myself spent more money here, Dr Lounlans, on Nawaubpore, than all that the Mailings, since the Ragman's Roll, have had to spend, whether got by thieving in days of yore, or by rack-rents and borrowing in our own time."

"But, sir," replied the young minister, fervently, "the day is yet far distant, and I hope will long remain so, when the honest people of Scotland will look tamely on and see mere wealth and ostentation treading down their ancient gentry."

"Ay, honest! Ah! that's but a small portion of the nation, even including the General Assembly of the Church and the College of Justice. But if they were as numerous as the daft and the imbecile, who, you will allow, are not to seek among gentry of the landed interest, as, indeed, in my opinion, they constitute the majority of the nation at large; for, you know, that every man of sense and talent seeks his for-

tune abroad, and leaves only the incapable and those who are conscious of their deficiencies at home——"

Apprehensive that the conversation might become a little too eagerly pointed, I here interposed, and said, to turn aside the sarcasm which I saw Dr Lounlans was preparing to launch: "Your observation, Mr Rupees, explains to me why it is so difficult to give any correct exhibition of Scottish manners, without bringing Tom o' Bedlams on the stage. In the Parliament House of Edinburgh you may see——"

"I beg, sir," said Dr Lounlans, interrupting me, "I beg your pardon.—Am I then to understand, Mr Rupees, that you are determined to persevere in your rigorous proceedings?"

"I intend to do no more than the law permits me to do. I will do nothing contrary to law; and if there is any rigour in the case, the fault is in the law, not in me."

"But," replied the Doctor, "consider public opinion."

"D—n public opinion," responded the Nabob—"I beg your pardon, Doctor."

"But, Mr Rupees, reflect on the prosperity with which it has pleased Heaven to crown your endeavours."

"Well, sir."—A short pause here intervened, as if the Doctor felt in some degree deterred from proceeding; but presently he rallied, and replied—"The same Power that has filled your cup to overflowing, hath seen meet to empty that of your ill-fated neighbour, and you should——"

"Should," interrupted the Nabob, sharply; "would you have me fly in the teeth of Providence?"

It was now evident, that, notwithstanding the popular eloquence and many excellent qualities of the Rev. Doctor, he was not possessed of stamina sufficient to stand a contest with a character of so much energy as the Nabob, whose original strength of mind had been case-hardened in the fiery trials of Indian emulation and ambition, and whose occasional liberality sprung more from ostentation and the feeling of the moment, than from any regulated generosity or sense of duty.

The Doctor rose somewhat flushed, and cold-

ly wishing the Nabob good morning, immediately left the room. I also rose and followed him. The Nabob at the same time had likewise risen; and as I was going out at the door, patted me on the shoulder, and chuckling with triumph, said in a whisper, "Haven't I done for him; did you ever hear such a fellow? Canning, I'm told, calls my friend Sir John, Bahaddar Jaw, but our worthy Padre would better merit the title."

CHAPTER XVIII.

On leaving Nawaubpore, having bid adieu to Dr Lounlans at the gate, I walked leisurely, in a mood of moral rumination, towards Auldbiggings.

It seemed to me that there was no chance of mitigating the dispositions of Rupees, nor any mode by which the old Laird could be extricated from his unhappy situation, save only that which Mrs Soorocks had, as I thought, so impertinently suggested. The more, however, that I reflected on her suggestion, ridiculous as it had appeared in the first instance, the more I became persuaded that it was not only plausible, but judicious; and accordingly, before I reached the avenue of the Place, I was resolved to all in my power to further and promote the marriage. Fortune favoured the benevolent intention.

On approaching the house, I discovered the old man seated, as his custom was about that time of day, on his own louping-on stane. He seemed more thoughtful than usual; instead of looking anxiously towards the high road to see who was going to, and who coming from the town, his head hung dejectedly drooping, his hands, the one within the other, rested on his knees. He was indeed so rapt in the matter of his own thoughts, that he did not observe me until I was close upon him.

After the customary interchange of morning civilities, I told him that I had been with the Nabob, whom, with a prospective view to the matrimonial proposition which I had determined to urge, I described with lineaments certainly as harsh as those which he had shown in the conversation with Dr Lounlans.

"Deed, sir," replied the Laird, with a sigh, "it's a' true that ye say: he's as boss in the heart, and as hard, as a bamboo cane; but what can ye expect frae the like o' him, or o' them, as the worthy Mr Firlot used to say, "beggars whom the Lord had raised from the dunghill, to set among the princes of his people?" Set

him up indeed! Before his mother's brother sent him to Indy, I mind him weel a dirty duddy do-nae-guid, that couldna even tak care o' his father's kye; for ae day he was sae taen up on the brae wi' getten the multiplication-table by heart—(weel has it taught him baith to increase and to multiply)—that he left the puir dumb brutes to tak care o' themselves, and ane o' them, a silly stirk, daunert o'er the quarry-craig, and was brained. But what am I to do?—to fight in law wi' this Great Mogul, wud, wi' my light purse, be as the sound o' the echo to the pith o' the cannon-ball. Gude help me, I maun submit! And what's to become o' me, wi' thae feckless auld hands, unhardened by work, and the book o' my life but half written? I may sing wi' Jenny in the sang—

'I wish that I was dead,
But I'm no like to dee.'"

To such despondency it was not easy to offer any immediate consolation, but I said, "It is much to be regretted, Mr Mailings, that at your time of life you have not the comfort of an agreeable companion to cheer you. A man of your

respectability, I think, might do worse than look out for a helpmate to lighten these cares that have fallen in evil days on your old age."

"I have had my thochts o' that," replied he, "but I fear I'm tyke auld, and November's no a time to saw seed. But between ourselves, I'm no overly fond o' the rule and austerity o' a wife, after the experience that I hae had o' the juggs o' matrimony that Mr Firlot set me in for the business o' Babby Coweaddens, 'cause she had got an injury and wyted me."

"You don't mean to say that the late Mrs Mailings was a woman of that description? I always heard her spoken of as one to whom you were greatly indebted for the order and frugality with which she managed your domestic concerns."

"It would hae been an unco thing an she had been in a faut," replied the Laird. "Nae dout she rampaged up and down the house frae Monday morning till Saturday night like a roaring lion, cowing the lasses, and dinging me about as if I had been nae better than a broom besom, by the whilk we grew rich in napry and

blankets. But O, she made dreadfu' saut kail on Sunday!"

"But, Mr Mailings, is it the case that you had been gallant to her before marriage?"

"I canna deny but I might hae been, but she was leed on if she wasna thranger wi' a Captain Gorget that was recruiting in the toun."

"Who was she?"

"Oh, she was weel eneugh in respec of connexions, for she was the only daughter o' Cowcaddens of Grumphyloan; she had lost her mither vera young, and so, being edicated amang the giglin hizzies and rampler lads o' the neebouring farms, she was—But, to make a lang tale short, Mr Firlot said, that if I didna marry her, she being o' sae respected a family, he wad gar me repent in the bitterest manner he could; so that rather than be sae disgraced, o' the twa evils I chose the least. But she's quiet noo, and her bairn lies by her side, and has, I trust, found a father on high, though its parent, by the father's side, in this world, sure am I, must hae been a matter o' doot when it was laid to my door."

"Well, but, Mr Mailings, though your first

marriage was not a happy one, might you not now, in your maturer years and riper judgment, choose for yourself? There, for example now, are the ladies of Barenbraes, excellent gentlewomen, rich, and of the purest character;—could you, Mr Mailings, do better than make up to one of them, and thereby obtain a careful and kind companion, and free yourself from the thraldom of the Nabob's oppression?"

"That meddlin woman, Mrs Sourocks, was here yestreen, on ane o' her sympatheezing visitations, and really spoke sensible on the vera same head; but ye know that baith the sisters are past the power o' posterity, which is an objection, even if my heart didna tell me that I ne'er could like either the tane nor the tither o' them: they're no for a man that likes a free house and a fu' measure: a' might be pushon that's aboon the plook wi' them,* and that, ye ken, wad never do for the hospitable doings o' the house o' Auldbiggings."

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* Scotch pint-stoups, before the reformation of the imperial measure, were made to hold something more than the standard quantity, but at the point of the true measure a small *papilla* or plook projected, the space between which and the brim was left

"Laird, better small measure than no drink."

"That's a gude's truth; but Miss Shoosie's very ordinar, and Miss Girzie ne'er was bonnie—I grue at the thochts o' either o' them."

"Mr Mailings, take the serious advice of a friend, who feels for your situation, and do not allow the fancies that may be pardonable in a young head, to bring your grey hairs down with sorrow to the grave."

At this moment Jock came running towards us with a paper in his hand, crying,—

"Laird, Laird, here's news, the king's greetin."

"What's he greetin for?" said the Laird; "I'm sure I hae mair cause, and it'll be lang or ye'll see me greet."

I took the paper from the servant's hand, and saw that it was a summons raised at the instance of Hugh Caption, notary public, for an assault

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for an *ad libitum*, an exercise of liberality on the part of vintners and other ministers to haustation. When, however, measure was regulated by the *scrimp* rule, it was said proverbially of those who did so, "that of their liquors all was poison abune the plook."

"This," said I, "Mr Mailings, should put an end to any scruples that you may have to the ladies of Barenbraes; and therefore, with your permission, I will go to them before returning home, and declare your desire to throw yourself at the feet of one of them. If you would take my advice, your affections should be set on Miss Shoosie, for she's the eldest sister."

"If I maun consent, I maun—there's nae help for't; and so ye may just choose for me. It's a sore thing for a man to be frightened into his first marriage by the bow wow o' a kirk session, and driven into a second by a coorse o' law."

CHAPTER XIX.

On arriving at the house of Barenbraes, I could not help feeling that my mission was one of peculiar delicacy. It required, indeed, all the consciousness of the benevolence and rectitude of my intentions to reconcile me to the task of confidant, or blackfoot, as it is called in classic Scotch, to such " a braw wooer" as the Laird.

I hesitated before entering at the dial on the green—took out my watch, saw that there was a difference of several minutes between the time of the gnomon and the chronometer—adjusted the latter—placed it to my ear to hear if it was going—not that my resolution to perform the duty I had undertaken was in any degree weakened. I only doubted as to the manner and terms in which I should, as proxy, declare a passion at once so ardent and refined.

As I was leaning against the dial, I overheard

the voice of Mrs Soorocks with the sisters resounding from the parlour. I went forward to the door, which was open. I again halted there, for the ladies were engaged in a vehement controversy on the very subject of my mission. No member of the corps diplomatique would lose the opportunity of listening to the cabinet councils of the court with which he was to negotiate, if he had it in his power, and therefore I stood still.

The first words I distinctly made out were from Miss Girzie.

"Deed, mem," said she, addressing, as it wuold seem, Mrs Soorocks, "the old gentleman has his failings, that ye must alloo."

"Failings!" replied Mrs Soorocks, "havena we a' our failings? and between friends, Miss Girzie, ye hae your ain infirmities likewise."

Here Miss Shoosie interposed, with a declaration to the effect that Mr Mailings would never be the husband of her choice.

"Choice, Miss Shoosie!" exclaimed the Laird's advocate, "Choice! Mony a far better woman than ye were in your best days never had a choice.—Really, at your time o' life, Miss Shoo-

sie,—ye ken ye're aulder than your sister—you ought to accept wi' a gratefu' heart, and be thankfu' to Providence, if onything in the shape o' a man is evened to you."

The widow made nothing by this taunt, for the indignant spinster retorted,

"It would be gude for us a' if we saw oursells as ithers see us; but if I could hae demeaned mysell to tak' up wi' sic men as some folk were glad to loup at, I might noo hae been in my widowhood. O but ye hae been lang obliged to thole that dispensation, Mrs Soorocks—that was your ain choice, nae dout."

"Sister," said Miss Girzie, "surely ye forget that Mrs Soorocks has aye been vera obliging to a' kinds o' wanters suitable to her years."

"O ay," replied Miss Shoosie, "we hae baith heard o' mair than ae instance o' her condescension."

"There was Dr Pestle," said Miss Girzie, "hi! hi! hi!"

"And Mr Grave, the relief minister, ha! ha! ha!" responded Miss Shoosie.

"It was said you were particular to auld

Captain Hawser o' the press-gang," added Miss Girzie.

"Was that true, mem?" subjoined her sister "I'm sure ony woman maun hae had a cheap conceit o' hersell that would hae thought o' sic an objik—and only three parts o' a man too, for he had a timmer leg."

To all this Mrs Soorocks replied with her wonted candour and suavity.

"It's very true, that there was a time when I was inclined to have changed my condition,—I'll ne'er deny't; but no one could ever impute to me a breach o' discretion—We live, however, in an ill-speaking warld, Miss Shoosie; and wasna there a time, my dear, when folks werena slack—they ought to have been punished, Miss Shoosie, for cooming your character in the way they did. But ye had great credit for your bravery. I didna think it was in the power o' woman to have sae face't it out. I allow frankly and freely, that it was a maist improbable thing, that a young woman o' a genteel family should hae foregathered in a glen by appointment wi' a blackavised, pockyawr'd, knock-kneed, potaoe-bogle o' a dominie. Ithers had their cracks,

as wha can stop the mouths o' a scandaleezing warld? but, for my part, I aye thocht and upheld the meeting for an accidental ane, and so I said at the time, to Mr Firlot, when he was bent on sending the elder to test the fact, and mak peremptory investigation. It's no to be tell'd to what a bonny pass matters might have been brought, for the Session were a' on the scent, and the daughter o' an heritor was game no every day to be hunted after. But, as I aye observed, it wad be mair candid and christian-like to let the thing drap; for, in the first place, it mightna be, and I houpit wasna true; and in the next place, coudna be proven, which was the best thing that could happen for baith parties, there being nae leeving witness, at least that either the members or me ever heard tell o'."

Here a yell so alarmed me, that I could not resist rushing into the room, where the amiable disputants, in the warmth of argument, had started from their seats, and were standing in the middle of the floor.

The aspect of Mrs Soorocks indicated the most resolute calmness, and a sweet smile played round her lips, and no one could have traced

the storm of passion raging within, but by the lightning that flashed from her eyes.

Miss Shoosie, a tall, meagre, heron-necked anatomy of womankind, was standing as stiff as Dr Gaubins, of Glasgow, of whom Beeny Hamilton said, that he looked as if he had swallowed a decoction of ramrods. Her hands were fiercely clenched, her cheeks pale, and her lips quivering, her teeth grinding, and her small greenish grey eyes sparkling, as if they emitted not constellations of fire only, but visible needles and pins.

Miss Girzie had thrown herself between them, and was pushing her sister back by the shoulders, evidently to prevent her from fixing her ten blood-thirsty talons in the imperturbable tranquillity of her antagonist's countenance.

On my appearance the storm was instantly hushed, the sisters hastily resumed their seats, and Mrs Soorocks, with ineffable composure, addressed herself to me.

"How do you do, sir? me and the leddies hae been just diverting ourselves, talking o'er auld stories, till we hae been a' like to dee of laughin. Miss Shoosie there ye see hasna got the better o't

yet—O! Miss Grizzy, but ye're gude at a guffaw; as for your sister, I'll no forget the way she would joke wi' me. I hope ye havena taen't ill, Miss Shoosie? I was just reminding her, sir, o' a wee bit daffin in the days o' her youthfu' thochtlessness."

The insulted virgin could stand no more. Bouncing on her feet, she gave a stamp that shook the aged mansion from roof to foundation, and raising her clenched hands aloft, she screamed through the throttlings of rage,

"It's false—it's false—as false as hell!"

And so in verity it was, for the whole insinuation, with all details and particulars, was only an invention got up by the ingenious Mrs Soorocks, on the spur o' the occasion, having no other material wherewithal to parry the cutting inuendoes of her acrimonious adversaries. The widow, however, took no notice of the judge-like energy of the denial, but said,—

"Good day, my old friends, and tak an advice from me, put a bridle on the neck o' your terrible tempers. Miss Girzie, I may say to you, as Leddy Law said to ane like you, 'may-

be if you would shave your beard, it would help to cool your head.' "

With these words she swirled meteor-like out of the room, with a magnificent undulation, or curtseying motion, before Miss Girzie could discharge the bomb of her retort. That it might not, however, be lost, but strike, as the artillerymen say, by *recouchet*, the infuriated virgin turned sharply to me, and said,—

" She's ane, indeed, to speak o' shaving faces —she ought to be taught to scrape her ain tongue. But it's beneath me to discompose mysell for sik a clash-clecking clypen kennawhat. She's just a midwife to ill-speaking."

Miss Shoosie, who had by this time in some degree rallied, exclaimed,—

" Sister—I beg, sister, ye'll say no more about her, for I'm determined to take the law;" and with these words she burst into tears.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN, after some desultory conversation, in which, with all my usual tact and suavity, I had in a great measure succeeded in soothing the irritated feelings of the ladies, Miss Girzie, "on household cares intent," had left the room, and finding myself on the sofa beside her sister, I began to throw out my feelers, with a view to ascertain in what manner the negotiation should be opened.

"Miss Shoosie," said I, gravely, "it is the misfortune of your sex to stand in need of a protector. Without some one of ours being interested in your happiness, the variety of insults and vexations to which you are hourly exposed—to say nothing of the value of a male friend in affairs of business—renders it the duty of every prudent woman, at some time of her life, to clothe herself with a husband."

In saying this, I laid my hand upon hers, to

give the greater emphasis to my persuasion, but the look with which she considered the movement, was to me truly alarming.

" 'Tis a very just observe, sir," replied she, sighing, and endeavouring to look amiable. Such particular manifestations brought me at once to the point, and I resumed,—

" You are sensible, Miss Shoosie, that no man can take a deeper interest in the happiness of his friends than I do;—and, as you are a lady of sense and knowledge of the world, I acknowledge to you, that my visit this day is for a very special purpose."

Here I felt her thumb, as it were, fondly disposed to turn up and embrace mine; and I was therefore obliged to be quick with the declaration, for I saw that we were running the risk of coming into what the Laird would have called a comical situation; so I added,—

" I have been, this morning, with our friend Auldbiggings, and have had a very earnest conversation with him on this very subject."

Miss Shoosie withdrew her hand, and taking hold of her elbows, she erected her person and said drily,—

"Well."

"He spoke of you with great tenderness lamenting that the circumstances of his first marriage had prevented him, in the ardour of youthful passion, from throwing himself at your feet."

"Did he really say so?"

"Nay, I assure you, that it would offend your delicacy were I to repeat the half of what he said; but I can assure you, that his youthful feelings towards you have undergone no change."

"No possible!" said Miss Shoosie, relaxing from her stiffness.

"It is, however, true, my dear madam; and surely it is much to be deplored, that two persons so well calculated to endear themselves to each other, should by the malice of Fortune have been so long kept asunder. What is your opinion, Miss Shoosie, of Mr Mailings?"

But instead of answering the question, she said,—

"Do you know, sir, that Mrs Soorocks, when ye came in, was talking in very high terms of him? And certainly I never heard that he was

guilty o' ony indiscreetness, sept in the misfortune o' his marriage; but in sic things the woman is aye mair to blame than the man, and there have been folk that said Mr Firlot the minister ought not on that occasion to have, in a manner, as they said, forced the marriage; but ever since Mr Mailings has been a widower, he has conducted himsell, I will allow, wi' the height o' discretion."

"But how does it happen, Miss Shoosie, that you and him never meet?"

"It's no my fau't," said she; "for ye ken that my sister and I are very retired; it's no our custom to wear other folk's snecks and hinges like Mrs Soorocks; nor wou'd it become women in our situation to be visiting a wanting man."

"Upon my word, Miss Shoosie, I do not see that there would be the least indecorum in your asking Mr Mailings and myself, on a Sunday afternoon, to a sober cup of tea."

"I wou'd have nae objection," was the answer; "but what way could it be brought about wi' propriety?"

"'Tis quite refreshing," replied I, "to con-

verse with a sensible woman.—Had you been Mrs Soorocks, Miss Shoosie, the chance is, that instead of the refinement and sensibility with which you have accepted the offer of my worthy friend the Laird's hand——"

"Offer, sir, I never have had an offer."

"O Miss Shoosie! what then is the purpose of my being here but to make you an offer?"

"You don't say so!" said she with a simper, looking away from me, and turning down the side of her head as if she was hiding blushes.

"I do, Miss Shoosie, and I think you most singularly fortunate in receiving such an offer from the man on whom your affections have been so long placed."

"Are you really sincere, sir? because if you are, I'll ne'er deny that I have long thocht that with proper management Mr Mailings might make an excellent husband."

"Then, Miss Shoosie, why delay your felicity and the felicity of the man of your choice?"

"Oh, sir, you would never advise me to take such a rash step as to change my condition without consulting my friends. Our sister Lady Chandos is at a distance——"

"I hope her ladyship is very well," said I, imitating the humour of Mrs Soorocks—"when did you hear from her last?"

"My sister was never gude at the writing."

"But her man of business, when he draws on you for the rents, surely lets you know of the welfare of her ladyship and the young heiress, who, I understand, is about coming of age? It will be a most fortunate thing, Miss Shoosie, both for you and Miss Grizzy, to have the assistance of a husband like Mr Mailings, when you come to settle accounts with the executors of your brother-in-law."

"To be sure, there is no needcessity that I should consult Lady Chandos, for when she was married she never consulted me; but I can give no answer to the proposal till I have conferred wi' Girzie."

"Then let us call her into the room, and settle the business at once—I shall return to Auldbiggings wi' a light heart, conscious that I have this day been instrumental in establishing the happiness of two persons worthy of one another."

"But, sir," replied Miss Shoosie with so-

lemnity, "is there no glammoury in what you hae been saying, for ye ken it would be thocht a most extraordinar thing were I to confess a preference for Mr Mailings, and nothing to come o't?"

I assured her that I was fully accredited to make the proposal, adding,—

"Indeed, Miss Shoosie, you are highly honoured, and your marriage cannot fail to be a happy one, since, like a princess, you are courted by proxy. Let us call in Miss Girzie, and as the day is warm, and I am tired with my walk, I hope on such a blythe occasion you will not refuse me a glass of your delicious currant wine and water."

"That you shall have, sir, without delay,—but you must leave me and my sister to confer in private."

"Am I then to give my friend any hopes?"

"I dare say you may say he needna despair."

"Miss Shoosie," I exclaimed, "you are a pattern to your whole sex, and I cannot but envy my friend that the disparity of our years, and the fidelity of your affections to him, would,

even if I were willing, allow me no hope of success as his rival."

"O sir, O sir!" said she with a self-congratulating titter, "ye gar me doot—I wish ye may hae a' this time been o' a true sincerity."

"Miss Shoosie, a marriage made up without jocularity was never a happy one; 'a dull bridal and a scrimp infore,' as the old proverb says, 'bodes quench'd love or toom pantries.' Bring in the wine and let us drink—May there ne'er be waur amang us."

CHAPTER XXI.

When I returned home in the evening, I sat down to the full enjoyment of those agreeable reflections which are sometimes all the reward that kind-hearted people like me receive in this world for the trouble of doing good and charitable actions.

The day, as I have already mentioned, had been uncommonly warm, but the twilight was cool, calm, and clear. The moon was just above the horizon, and so directly behind the high church and steeple of "the canny town;" as King James the Sixth used to call Paisley, that they appeared like an apocalyptical vision dimly on her disk. I heard the faint far-off sound of the bell at intervals,—now and then the bleating of the sheep on the whinny knowes, accompanied with the occasional bark of their guar-

dian colley—while the sound of a flute from a neighbouring grove, as Harvey says in his Meditations, came upon the ear with "auricular fragrance," or as a lake poet describes the dashing of oars during the night on the bosom of Windermere, in his amiable poem of the Hoxter.

As I was sitting by the open window of my study, tasting the freshness of the evening air, and listening to the soothing harmony of those mingled sounds, I observed the shadow of a man on the moonlight wall of the garden, coming by the footpath towards the house, and presently Mr Tansy the schoolmaster emerged upon the lawn from behind the shrubbery.—I immediately ordered candles, and by the time they were lighted he was admitted.

"You have come in a happy moment," said I to him: "I have been enjoying the delicious tranquillity of this still and fragrant night. The spirit of contentment is abroad, and there is a pleasing augury of peace and repose in the aspect of universal nature."

I knew that these euphonious phrases, imitated from the style of that mysterious little work, "the Omen," in which the cabalistic sentimen-

tality of our Northern neighbours has been so prominently brought out, would act as ignited touch-paper on the Dominie's inflammable enthusiasm, and so it happened.

"Call you it a happy time, when everything indicates a crisis?—The sun hath for the season reached the maturity of his power; he sent forth a heat which the memory of the oldest person in the parish cannot parallel; and from this day his glory will begin to decline into the ineffectual lustre, which illuminates but warms not the dreariness of winter—The moon is in this very hour at the full, and already hath begun to dwindle and to wane—The grass hath been cut down—the sheep are shorn of their fleeces, the sweet influences of the spring are over and gone, and the Summer pauses in the weaving of her garlands, as if she had twined enough for the use of the year—all gives the sign of mutation, and the fortunes of men are in unison with the condition of things. We shall hear rumours of strange matters that will speedily ensue. The green boughs of prosperity will soon be seen with the sere and yellow leaf—tidings of change

and decay will come among us, and proud hearts will be moved with disastrous fears."

This sort of almanack prognostication of the good and simple man, derived an impressive emphasis in its meaning from the events of the day; insomuch, that although I had set him off in the mere playfulness of the moment, it had yet considerable effect upon my feelings, and I replied,—

"There is something of a vague and hazy truth in your observations; but I have heard as yet of no particular occurrence to convince me of the existence of that astrological reciprocity between the course of moral actions and celestial signs, which you so often maintain. On the contrary, I have this day myself sown the seeds of an event which cannot fail to be of prosperous issue."

The philosopher looked serious, and said,—

"Modesty requires that you should add to the bravery of such a boast, an 'if likeas,' if no unforeseen accident comes forth to blight it. But whatever experience, sir, you think you have had of a contrariety to my doctrines, I myself have met with a wonderful instance

of their truth. This very day, a man and a child have come to Renfrew, and are abiding at the public there. What I have heard of them, and of the jeopardies they have come through, convinces me that they are unconscious agents to bring about some singular mutation that is ordained to come to pass in this country side. They have come here, as I am told, from a foreign land, in quest of great wealth that appertains to the child, whose parentage was burned at sea. More I have not heard; but hearing this much, I could do no less than come to tell you; for knowing how well gifted you are wi' the faculty o' curiosity, I am sure that you can lose no time in going to Renfrew the morn's morning, to satisfy yourself, by sifting all the particulars, and doing your utmost to help the friendless in this to them strange land."

"I beg your pardon, Mr Tansy, I am not a man of such curiosity as you seem to think, but only actuated by a liberal spirit of inquiry, the love of truth, and a constitutional penchant for facts."

I was indeed not quite pleased to hear myself so considered, notwithstanding the compensa-

tion in the just acknowledgment of my benevolence.

Our conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from Mrs Soorocks, in "the form and pressure" of one of her servant lasses. That lady was always particular in the choice of her handmaids, both as to character and personal appearance, and therefore I desired Leezy, as the girl was called, to be sent into the room, that I might hear the message from her own lips; at the same time, I requested the Dominie to sup with me, begging him to have the goodness, for a minute, to take one of the lights and go into the dining-room, giving, as my reason, that I knew the business, to which Mrs Soorocks was desirous I should attend, was private and confidential.

The Dominie accordingly left the room, and Leezy came forward.

She was of the better order of Scottish housemaids—a ruddy lively girl of twenty, and habited as befitted her condition. Her ancles, which is the next thing one is apt to look to in a woman after her face, were well turned, stockingless, it is true, but, even by candle-light, of a

fresh pink colour, which finely contrasted with her neat black shoes; her petticoat was of chocolate-coloured calimanco, and of an engaging brevity, and she wore a white dimity jupe, with a many-coloured silk handkerchief over her full bosom; her hair, saving the front locks in ringlets, was closely smoothed back, and gathered within a kipplin comb.

"Weel, Leezy," said I, "which o' your sweethearts has led ye sae far a-field to-night?"

"Sweethearts!—the last sweetheart I had was a gingebread faring, and I eat it."

"O had I been made o' gingerbread, and in such lips!" replied I, in the tone of Romeo wishing himself a glove.

"Ye would hae been o' some use," retorted Leezy; "but I have nae time the night to hæver wi' you, for my mistress tell'd me to come straight back, and she aye threeps that I lose her time when I forgather wi' you,—she's just been wud wi' a passion o' haste the night."

The spirit of inquiry was roused within me by this remark, and I exclaimed—

"What has happened?"

"How can I tell?—Ye ken best what trafeckin has been between you and her; but she bade me gi' you her compliments, and to say, that she wished ye would come the morn, after breakfast, and convoy her to Mr Roopy's, on the business that ye ken o'."

At that moment, Mr Tansy, with the candle in his hand, looked in at the door, and said,—

"I thought she was away."

"Ah, Mr Tansy," cried I, "just busy yourself for half-a-minute more in thoughts of adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, and I'll be with you immediately."

Then turning to Leezy, I added,—

"Give my compliments to your mistress, and say I'll wait upon her; but take care of yourself with the young lad that's waiting at the gate."

"He'll wait lang that I care for," replied Leezy, slily adding, as she passed the Dominie, in quitting the room, "Whan, Mr Tansy, are ye to make anither clipse o' the moon?"

CHAPTER XXII.

According to appointment, I went over immediately after breakfast to Keckleton, the residence of Mrs Soorocks, whom I found sitting with her pelisse and bonnet on, waiting for my coming. The instant I entered her neat well-ordered parlour, she, snatching her gloves and parasol from one of the shining mahogany tables, said,—"I'm ready, and hae been expecting you, for I fear, if we dinna mak haste, that the ill you and Dr Lounlans hae done will be past reparation. Bonny ambassadors ye hae shown yourselves! But come awa."

With that she took my arm and hurried me out of the house.

"My dear ma'am," cried I, "but tell me first how you intend to proceed?"

"Dinna ye fash your thumb about that; ye'll

see that I'll no let a wark o' needcessity slip through my fingers like a knotless thread."

The rest of our conversation till we reached the verandah of Nawaubpore was not worthy of particular preservation, although pertinent enough to the matter in hand, namely, the concerns and character of our neighbours.

Our reception by the Nabob was particularly courteous; to the lady he was indeed all smiles and gallantry.

After we had been seated a few minutes, he shouted with a voice that made us both start, "Q'hy," which brought into the room one of his Indian servants, to whom he said something in his own language touching tiffin.

"What an elegant creature that is!" said my companion, "for though his face is the colour o' a brass jeely-pan, and his dress like a man's on a tea cup, hasna he a genteel manner about him?"

By this I discovered to what key she had modulated her meditated performance.

"Your remark is perfectly just, madam," said the Nabob; "there is a natural grace even amongst the lowest of the Asiatics, which no

European, unless he has been very long in the country, can acquire. I have seen a Metranie throw on her capra in a style that an English princess, whom you would call here the ornament of society, would have given half her dignity to be able to imitate."

"O Mr Roopy—Nawaubpore, as I should rather ca' you—I always heard that ye gaed very young to Indy."

"Yes, ma'am, I certainly did, but besides that, I had the good fortune to be early attached to our residency at the court of Delhi, where I had an opportunity of frequently associating not only with the first native society in India, but with the princes of the blood of Timour."

"Nae wonder, that wi' such advantages of education, you hae the fine taste that everybody's speakin about. O but that's a lovely picture! and what a handsome young gentleman that is there, on the back o' that elephant. Weel, I never thocht that an elephant was just a pig grown out o' the bounds o' moderation —but, dear me, Mr Roopy—Nawaubpore, I should say—I think that bonny lad on the beast's back must hae been a relation o' yours.

for he's really very like you—it's weel seen that he has been amang superior folk—nane o' our hamewart gentry cou'd sit wi' sic an air o' composity in the middle o' a stramash like that. —Did the teegur there, really rin awa wi' the blackamoor?"

"He would have done so," replied the Nabob, "had it not been for the trueness of my aim, for I'm the young man in the houdah that you have pleased to compliment; and it was considered in those days a very good likeness."

"In those days, Nawaubpore? That canna hae been vera lang ago. But I have heard that you have a wonderfu' fine collection o' pictures. I hae a great inclination that way, ever since I saw Daniel in the Lion's Den, in Hamilton Palace, and that was on my marriage jaunt to the Falls o' Clyde. It's an auld story, Nawaubpore. Ye were then a young man, making conquests o' the yellow ladies, I doot na, in that great Mogul toon, where ye learnt manners."

I had begun at this to be afraid that the lady's curry would prove too rich even for the Oriental palate of the Nabob. But the complacent smile which played over his turmeric-co-

loured countenance, soon convinced me of the capacity of the Indian temperament for adulation. But it would seem that there is something in the influences of the sacred Ganges, that generates an inordinate craving for flattery, as well as the hepatic maladies—there have been cases of this disease even late in life, a noble instance of it very recently, where the symptoms so insatiable in India, are said scarcely to have been mitigated by empirical dozes of the *Leadenhall* faculty.

" My pictures," said the Nabob, " are not very remarkable—some people, however, have tho't well of them—but ma'am, allow me the gratification to show them to you, such as they are."

" Na !" said Mrs Soorocks, taking his offered arm, " this is politeness ;" and as they walked out of the room I followed them.

All she beheld filled her apparently with the most extraordinary delight. On entering the principal drawing-room, she exclaimed—

"O Mr Roopy—Nawaubpore, as I should weel ca' ye—you and me are just like King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, when he was showing

her all his wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table."

"That you shall see presently," said the Nabob, laughing, "for I have ordered tiffin in the dining-room."

"And I see, like him, ye hae sitting servants too!" rejoined the lady; "all this must hae cost a power o' money, Nawaubpore?"

"It did cost a few lacs, and a great deal more than I could well afford."

"Weel, I'm vera sorry indeed to hear that—it accounts for what I have heard; for sure am I, a gentleman o' your extraordinar liberality, had ye no straitened yoursell wi' this grandeur, would never hae thocht of molesting that poor silly doited do-naething Auldbiggings about his wadset."

"O, not quite so bad as that neither, ma'am, for all his debt would be but a drop in the bucket in my affairs," said the Nabob.

"Weel, I was sure o' that, and I so said to them that told me; and I said likewise, that you had been very ill used, for if Auldbiggings didna insult you himsell, he egget on the misleart creature his servant-man to break your

land-surveyor's implement; and that it wasna the worth o' the money that gar't you persecute him, if it were sae, for that ye were a man far aboon heedin' whether ye were pay'd at this time or seven years hence, especially as you could not but know that the property would come vera soon to you in a natural way—the feckless body being in a deep decline, wi' a great hoast, and a sore defluction o' the chest."

"I have long known," said the Nabob, laughing, "that his *chest* was out of order."

Here the lady burst into a most immoderate guffaw, in which the Nabob heartily joined. At the conclusion she exclaimed,—

"Really, Nawaubpore, ye're as funny as ye're wise; but it's no Christian-like for you and me to be gambollan o'er the weak man's infirmities—couldna ye just let him be? I'm sure, if I had but the tenth part o' your forton, and no the half o' your generosity, rather than hear the clash that's bizzin' about a' the kintra-side concerning you and Auldbiggings, I would put his heritable bond in a blank cover—I wouldna demean myself to write the body, and send it to him wi' my contempts."

I thought Mrs Soorocks truly like the Queen of Sheba for her management in this instance, especially when the Nabob, with a slight shade of thoughtfulness, replied, he was sorry to hear that there was so bad an account of himself in the country.

"But," replied she, "I never believed it; and ye needna fash yoursell, as ye ken it's no true—it's a soogh that'll soon be ower."

"Everything, my dear madam," said the Nabob, "is in this world misrepresented and much exaggerated—that hectoring, lecturing prig of a fellow, Padre Lounlans, came here dictating to me what I should do."

"He's a self-conceited man, Dr Lounlans," interrupted the lady, "he would rule the wisest in the parish if he could, and for your own dignity, Nawaubpore, you who have seen so much o' the great world, couldna suffer yoursell to be governed by the likes o' him. It will, however, be a pity if you let your scorn o' a meddlin minister hurt your ain character. If I was in your place, noo that the Doctor's awa to be married, I would show the world that I would do muckle

mair o' my ain free will than I wad do either for fleechin or preachin."

The Nabob was now evidently thaw'd, and said,—

"You think my own tho'ts, ma'am—I have been for some time intending to stop the proceedings which my man of business had advised me to institute."

"But," said Mrs Soorocks, "if ye stop the proceedings, which is as much as can be expected of you, I wouldna advise ye to gie up your heritable bond; for if ye dinna get the property at his death, somebody less deserving will."

"I'm sure, Mrs Soorocks," said the Nabob, "I shall do anything you like in the matter; I am too happy in having made the acquaintance of a lady so judicious, to refuse her any wish in so trifling a matter—allow me the honour to show you the way to the dining-room."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Having bid adieu to the Nabob at the Fakeir gate, or, as Mrs Soorocks called it, "the Beautiful Gate," to which he had accompanied us, we walked on together, congratulating each other on the success of our undertaking.

"Weel," said the lady, "ye see how a thing may be done, if folk kent how to set rightly about it. To be sure, considering that Dr Lounlans is a young man no experienced in the ways o' the world, and that ye're but an authour, which, in a certain sense, is only a something between a dominie and a bookseller, and that Nawaubpore is a man o' abilities (though a thocht vain o' them, that maun be allow't)—it was none surprising that ye baith cam sae little speed.—Folks say that the Nabob's proud, but, for my part, I think he's a man o' condescension ;—and

hasna he a fine style o' manners? It will be lang in the day or ye'll see ane o' our stirks o' country gentlemen linking a leddy about his house, and showing her his plenishing and other curiosities. Poor bodies! they ne'er hae a greater curiosity than themselves—he maun indeed be a rich man yon—I said he was like King Solomon in all his glory, and, like Solomon, he has his weak side too; but I couldna help thinking, as he showed me his gold and his silver, and his precious stones—didna ye think the big chiny jars maist handsome?—that he was mair like Hezekiah showing the men that brought him the present, after he was no weel, from Berodoch-Beladin, the son of Beladin King of Babylon—It's surely a neglect in the Scriptures no to tell us what the present was, for no doot it was some very fine thing.—I hope, however, that what Nawaubpore has shown to us this day of his precious things, his spices and his ointments—there was rather an overly ostentation of spice in yon mugglecatauny soup—but we shouldna look a gien horse in the mouth, so I hope that the pride of the Nabob's heart is no to be dismayed wi' the sight o' his veshels o' gold, and

his veshels o' silver, carried away captive, as it were, to the Babylon o' Glasgow, to be put in the fiery furnace o' William Gray's melting-pot."

This speech, dishevelled and ravelled as it was, reminded me of the schoolmaster's prediction, and I told Mrs Soorocks of the strangers who had come to Renfrew, and of my intention of then going there to see them, advising her, at the same time, to proceed to Auldbiggings to comfort the Laird with the tidings of our achievements.

She was greatly struck with the coincidence of the stranger's arrival at the time of what she called the Nebuchadnezzar vanity of the Nabob, about the great Babylon he had built, and she would willingly have accompanied me to see the bottom of such "a judgment-timed event," using many ejaculatory terms concerning what might come to pass. I had, however, enjoyed enough of her company for one morning, and shook her off with as much civility as possible, promising to call on her as I returned home, to tell her all the particulars. We accordingly se-

parated where the roads diverged—I for the royal borough, and she for the Laird.

I had not parted from her more than two or three hundred yards, when I met Jock the Laird's man coming leisurely from the town.

"Where have you been this morning, John?" said I, "and how is your master?"

"He's like a lying-in wife," replied Jock, "as weel as can be expecket, and I hae been getting for him a cordial o' mair efficacy for his state, than a' the drogues o' a doctor's bottle."

"Indeed! and what may that be?"

"What may that be? I'm sure ye ken that the malady wherewi' he's afflicted, is a sair disease."

"The want of money, do you mean? What's your remedy, John?"

"I had hain'd three and twenty shillings and fivepence hapeny out o' the wage that was pay'd me twa year bygane, and I barrow'd four shillings and sixpence from Jenny Clatterpans—ye'll ken her, she's ane o' our lasses. Wi' that, and a bawbee that I saved out o' twopence that the Laird sent me to waster on snuff for him —isn't a daft-like thing for a man to create

an appetite in his nose, when he's sae fash'd to get the wherewithal to satisfy his mouth?—wi' the aught-and-twenty-shillings I hae bought a sixteenth, and when it comes up a prize o' therty thousan pounds, me and the Laird intend to go o'er the knowes to the Great Mogul, and pay him his wadset, plack and bawbee, sine snap our fingers in his face. But oh, sir, sic a stramash is in the toun o' Arenthrou! The bailies are rinning about hither and thither like dogs wi' pans tied to their tails; for some Paisley hempies that cam doun to the fishing, it being their fast-day, have gotten themselves fou, and mortally affronted the toun by miscaaing the gude steeple. The folk wadna thol't, and coudna stand it; so, weel-a-wat, they hae gotten sic quarters in the stane chaummer as they richly deserve. If ye want to see the tail o' the business, I wad advise ye to muve on a thocht brisker, so I wish ye a very guid morning."

With this scrap of provincial intelligence, as big with importance to Jock as the mutiny at the Nore was to the British government, the Laird's man sauntered home to Auldbiggings, and I onwards to Renfrew.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I FOUND the stranger with his young ward in "the inn," and, upon requesting to see them, was shown into "the best room up the stair," where they were then sitting.

Mr Coball, for so the stranger was called, was a plain but respectable elderly person, of a tropical appearance; the little boy wore also the impress of the Indian clime, for though in voracious health, his face was colourless, and though his eyes sparkled with the morning light of life, his cheeks were untinged with any of its vernal bloom.

It was not easy to explain the motives of my intrusion, but I got through the ceremony of self-introduction tolerably well, and without much embarrassment; for instead of affecting to offer any apology, I professed to offer my ser-

vices, at the same time assuring Mr Coball, that although I should have much pleasure in showing him everything interesting in the town, there was in fact nothing worthy of a traveller's notice in it.

"I'm not here," he replied, "in quest of those things which attract travellers—but, as it were, by accident; yesterday I was landed at Greenock from America, and was on my way to Edinburgh, for the purpose of instituting some inquiry to discover the relations of that poor child, when I happened to hear the name of a gentleman mentioned, who is probably the chief person I am so anxious to find. He left India two or three years ago, that is, if the same whom I believe he is, and I have halted here to call on him, which I propose to do in the course of the day."

But not to dwell on uninteresting particulars, it proved that the gentleman in question was the Nabob, and that he was supposed to be either nearly related to the boy, or acquainted with his friends; if he had not been executor to his father, who died about five years before, leaving a wife and three children.

"They were coming home," said Mr Coball, "in the same ship with me, but by the terrific calamity that befell us, and our subsequent disasters, all the evidences (with the exception of a few seemingly unimportant letters) have been lost, by which the unfortunate child may be identified to his relations."

He was too much moved by the recollection which this incidental allusion to his misfortunes recalled, for me to interpose any question; but as his emotion subsided, he began to describe his sufferings, till he insensibly came to talk of the catastrophe of the ship."

"It happened," said he, "in a Saturday night—we had been all merry, according to the custom at sea, and had retired to our respective cabins and births, in the hope of making the Cape in the course of a day or two. I had just fallen asleep, when a sudden and strange noise roused me from my pillow—I listened, and a wild cry of fire was instantly echoed by many voices. I started up, and ran on deck—I could see nothing, but only a steamy white smoke issuing from the fore-hatchway—In a moment every soul on board was around me.

"The captain with undismayed coolness ordered all to prepare for the worst, and the other officers with their trumpets were immediately at their posts, directing the crew in the attempt to extinguish the flames. The night was calm—the heavens above were all serene, and the sea lay so still around, that the ship appeared to hang in the centre of a vast starry sphere, so beautiful and bright was the reflection of the skies in the unbounded ocean.

"I may not describe the dreadful contrast which the scene on board presented to that holy tranquillity. There were distraction, and horror, and wild cries, and fearful screams, and hideous bursts of delirious laughter. Then there was a crash below, and silence for a moment—and then the busy troubled sound of the consuming destruction, felt as well as heard, gnawing and devouring the inward frame and beams of the ship, still growing louder and fiercer.

"In the meantime the boats were lowering—the first that floated was instantly overloaded, and sank with a horrible startling cry—every soul who had so wildly leapt on board perished.

"The rage of the burning still increased—it

was no longer possible to go below, without the risk of suffocation.

"Another boat was launched—one of the officers leaped on board, and, sword in hand, shoving her from the ship's side, suffered none to follow until water and provisions were handed in—but notwithstanding his prudent endeavours she was soon filled both with the sailors and the passengers. The mother of this orphan was standing on the gangway with her three children, she looked as if she too would have leapt into the boat, but the babies clung to her, and so hung upon her arms, that she could not disentangle herself from their fond and frantic embraces.

"I tore this poor boy from off her—she cried, 'O save him if you can!'—the third boat was by this time in the water—I flung him to a sailor on board; she snatched up the other two beneath her arms, and with a shrill dismal shuddering shriek, which made every one that hung clustering about the shrouds and gangway look round, she rushed into the smouldering cabin and shut the door.

"Her madness infected all who witnessed it

—the boat was pushing off—there was no other chance for me—I leapt into the water and was taken on board—many followed me, but the officer, with a terrible compassion for those who might be saved, hewed off their hands with his cutlass as they laid hold of the gunwale—'Row,' he cried to the sailors who had seized the oars, 'the fire is making towards the magazine—Row, off, or we shall be blown to pieces.'

"The sailors rowed with their utmost vigour —As we left the ship a cry arose from all the unfortunate wretches who were abandoned to their doom—so frantic, so full of woe and despair, that it made even the firm-minded officer exclaim, 'Good God, what is that!'

"I covered my ears with my hands, and bent my forehead to my knees, that I might neither hear nor see.

"When we had rowed to some distance, the men at the oars paused—I uncovered my ears and looked up—a deep, low, hoarse, murmuring and crackling noise, came from the ship, and now and then a human cry. As yet the flames had not appeared—but all around us, save where those dread and dismal sounds arose, was still-

ness and solemnity—and the smoke from the devoted vessel appeared like the shrouded form of some incomprehensible and tremendous phantasma, ascending from the sepulchres of the ocean to the dominions of omens and powers.

"We looked at the spectral sight with terror and in silence—The orphan was clinging to my knees—at last the fire began to break out. The flames first showed themselves at the cabin windows—in a moment they whirled up the rigging—the sails blazed, and the ship was for the space of a minute like some unblest apparitional creation of sorcery.

"'It is all over,' said the officer, and his voice sounded hollowly over the mute and echoless ocean. 'The fire is in the gun-room! Ha!'

"At that instant a vast sheet of flame filled the whole air, and like an angry demon unfurling his wings, scattered meteors and malignant fires against the stars. The black forms of many things hovered like motes in the sunbeam for a moment in the blaze. I distinctly saw an anchor, and many like men with outspread arms.

"That momentary and indescribable vision

of fires and fragments, was succeeded by a booming roar, as if an earthquake had raised his voice from the abysses of the silent waters, and then there was a numerous plashing noise of many things falling around us into the sea, but that too soon passed, and then there was darkness and silence.

"At that moment a cold wet hand caught hold of mine, which was hanging over the boat's side—and a man from the sea cried in a homely Aberdonian voice, 'For Christianity, will ye no tak me up?' The officer heard him, and relenting from his firm and merciful purpose, ordered him to be taken on board—'Na, na,' cried the Scotchman, 'tak my bag first,' and he held up to me a small haversack which I grasped and lifted in; but in the same instant, an undulation of the sea came rolling from the whirlpool where the ship had sunk—the boat rose on the swell, the fated wretch lost his hold, and sank beneath her for ever!"

After a short pause Mr Coball added, "It pleased Providence to rescue us next morning from our perilous situation—a ship bound for the Isle of France had seen the glare of the

burning during the night, and steering towards it when the wind freshened, came up to us by daybreak, and took us all on board. As the orphan (whose name is Charles Bayfield) still hung about me, I undertook, if possible, to return him to his friends. He is a singularly sharp boy for his years, and in the Aberdonian who had so strangely preferred a bag to his life, he had recognized one of his mother's servants —the contents of the bag were in consequence adjudged to belong to him, and assigned to my custody. They consisted of the letters I have mentioned—besides several packets of valuable pearls and other costly trinkets, which may help me to discover his friends. But I hope the Mr Rupees of this neighbourhood is the same gentleman of that name, who by the letters appears to have been the executor of the deceased Colonel Bayfield, the child's father."

Our conversation after this became general. Mr Coball mentioned several things, the knowledge of which he had acquired from the letters in the bag, and which convinced me that the Mr Rupees he was in search of could be no other than our Nabob. But I became uneasy

when he stated that by some of the letters it appeared Colonel Bayfield had died very rich, and that the bulk of his fortune was in the hands of his executor, from whom his widow had not been able to obtain any satisfactory information concerning it. I did not, however, divulge what I feared, but only advised Mr Coball to see the Nabob as soon as possible, adding, "If you find the assistance of any friend necessary, make no scruple of calling on me, for you have both interested my feelings and awakened my curiosity." I then took my leave.

Thus it came to pass, that what with the Laird's affairs, and this new adventure, I, good easy man, who never meddled with any other body's business—for my innocent curiosity can never be called meddling—had as much toil for my feet, work for my hands, and talk for my tongue, as Mrs Soorocks herself—mine, however, was owing to the purest and most disinterested motives, while her visitations sprung from a prying disposition and an unaccountable desire to have a finger in every pie baked in the neighbourhood—the neighbourhood did I say! —I might well say the country—I have indeed

often wondered that she did not remove herself to the multifarious field of Glasgow, but her reason was excellent,—" Because," said she, " nobody in a populous town cares for one another, and I would die if I did not ken something about my neighbours—It's no a field for dispensing the workings of grace, or the exercise of a mind void of offence, for I love to do good, especially to my friends in affliction." How blind some people are to their most obvious defects !

CHAPTER XXV.

Fatigued with my long walk, the heat of the day, and the influence of my dinner, I had thrown myself on the sofa to indulge in a short siesta, before going, as I had promised, to tell Mrs Soorocks the result of my journey to Renfrew. I had not, however, stretched out my limbs many minutes when that indefatigable personage herself was announced.

"I thought," said she, as soon as she had entered the room, "I would spare you the trouble of coming to me, for although I was just curious to hear the discoveries that ye hae made, I could better spare hearin o' them, than refrain frae telling you o' the tribulation we are baith likely to be put in for the pains we hae taken, out o' a sense o' religion, to help the Laird in his jepordies."

"What tribulation? What has happened?"

"O, the swine's run thro't!" exclaimed she; "no sooner had I told the auld gaumeril that Nawaubpore was a perfec gentleman, and was disposed not only to treat him with mitigation, but to allow him to live on the estate upon easy terms for the remainder of his life, than he began to hum and haw, and to wish that he hadna geen authority to you to bespeak ane o' the Miss Minnigaffs to marry him—Did ye ever experience such black ingratitude?"

"You do not say so, my dear madam—if he draws back, what shall I do? I have pledged my honour for him to Miss Shoosie."

"I see nothing for it but to tak her yoursell," said Mrs Soorocks laughing.

"It is no laughing matter to me, Mrs Soorocks, after the praises I have bestowed on Miss Shoosie, which, though they carried no offer, might yet perhaps, by the help of Edinburgh advocacy, be screwed into as much as, if it did not draw damages, would draw from my pockets the fees both of advocate and writer, and worse than all, make me be talked of as a perjured wretch in all the boarding-schools of Athens; even though

the case should happen to be accurately reported in that amusing periodical, Shaw and Dunlop's Decisions of the Court of Session."

We were here interrupted by my servant coming into the room, saying that the ladies of Barenbraes wanted to speak a word wi' myself in private.

"They'll be comin to consult you anent takin the law o' me," said my visitor, endeavouring to smile; and she added, "Oh but this is a treacherous warld! Howsoever, ye can go, sir, and see what they daur to say, and I'll bide till ye're done wi' them. I redd ye, sir, tak tent that ye say naething to put up their birses, for when angered they are perfect wild-cats."

I accordingly left her and went to the ladies, who had been shown into the drawing-room, and were sitting on the sofa, with pink silk scarfs, like twin cherries on one stalk. Miss Shoosie was doing amiable with bridelike bashfulness, her eyes perusing the carpet, while she played with her shoe toe with the point of her parasol. Miss Girzie had less of downcast modesty in her appearance. Her parasol lay across her knees, and was resolvedly grasped at the ex-

tremities, while her countenance indicated both fortitude and intrepidity.

"We have come, sir," said she, "having considered the proposal ye made to my sister yesterday——"

The "ye maun tak her yoursell," of Mrs Soorocks still ringing in my ears, I exclaimed, "Proposal, ma'am! I made no proposal!"

"Sister!" cried Miss Girzie, "sister, is it possible that you could be mistaen?—but I told you that it was ower gude a godsend to come to our door, especially as Auldbiggings has done sae lang without a wife."

This speech relieved me in one respect, that is, in as far as I thought myself implicated; but, considering what Mrs Soorocks had told me of the alteration in the Laird's views, I began to feel as if I had only got out of the frying-pan into the fire; nevertheless, I mustered self-possession enough to say with some show of gaiety,

"Well, ladies, and what is the result of your deliberation?"

"I told my sister," resumed Miss Girzie, "that there could be no objection to Mr Mailings as a man, which was quite her opinion; but

I thocht it wouldna be prudent of her to give her consent to an acceptance of his hand, until we both knew what sort o' settlement he was disposed to make upon her."

"Settlement! Miss Girzie," cried I, glad to find any loophole—"Settlement—surely, ladies, you must have long known the embarrassed state of Mr Mailings's affairs—Were times to mend, as we hope they will do, doubtless he may have it in his power to make a settlement; but really, under existing circumstances, anything like a regular settlement ought not to be expected."

"Is't possible," replied Miss Girzie, "that you cou'd suppose my sister wou'd marry ony man without a provision for a family? I'm sure she shou'd ne'er hae my consent to such indiscreetness."

Glad to find the venerable spinster in so sturdy a humour, I grew a little bolder, and said,—

"Whatever your sentiments, Miss Girzie, may be, I have always had a very high opinion of the disinterestedness of your sister, and will say so before herself, there where she sits; but

if I thought that in an affair of the heart, after the great tenderness and affection shown by my friend Mr Mailings, she could be so mercenary as to make any such sordid stipulation, I would advise him to have nothing further to say to her."

Here Miss Shoosie said, with a plaintive accent, "I'm no o' a mercenary disposition, and so I told my sister when she first spoke o' settlements."

This was alarming, and I was completely perplexed when Miss Girzie subjoined—

"It's vera true, Shoosie, but when a thoughtless young couple's coming thegether, it behoves their friens to see that the solid temporalities are no neglected in the delusions o' love."

"Indeed, Miss Girzie, you are quite right, and you would be wanting in sisterly affection if you did not see a proper jointure secured. At the same time I will be plain with you, as the friend of Mr Mailings I will set myself against everything of the kind. I am very sorry, ladies, that so unsurmountable a bar should have arisen to the completion of a union every way desirable."

Miss Shoosie moved as if she would interpose to prevent me from proceeding, but I was so apprehensive of a more frank avowal of her willingness to accept the Laird, that I raised my voice, and continued—

"It cannot, however, be helped. I cannot see a gentleman's affections treated as no better than saleable commodities. You will excuse me, ladies, but my feelings are strong on the occasion. I do not blame you, however, Miss Girzie, you are but doing your duty as I am doing mine. I will tell Mr Mailings of what has passed; and as a lady is waiting for me on particular business in another room, you will pardon me for so abruptly wishing you a good afternoon."

Miss Girzie at these words started up, and said, "Sir, sir, just a minute."

"I can hear no more," cried I; "it is plain you intend to make a bargain with my friend. No abatement of expectation, no retraction of opinion on the subject, can change my mind. I may seem to you warm, ladies, and I am so; who can help it, when one hears of a gentle-

man's heart and hand regarded as of no value, unless the hand be filled with glittering trash!"

The tone in which I expressed myself, had so sounded through all the house, that Mrs Soorocks came rushing into the room, crying, "Gudeness me, have they flown upon you too?"

At the sight of that lady the two sisters rose, and, making a formal courtly courtesy, moved towards the door, while she returned the recognition by another so profound, that she seemed to have fairly seated herself on the floor, setting up at the same time a guffaw, that made them tottle out of the room with short nimble steps, supporting each other, as if some horrid monster was bellowing at their heels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

When I had told Mrs Soorocks of what had passed with the ladies, and related to her the conversation I had held with Mr Coball—when we had mingled our opinions respecting the demand which was likely to come so suddenly on the Nabob, and when I saw the interest which the doubtful situation of that gorgeous personage had excited in the eager sympathy of my visitor, I ordered tea for her, that we might discuss at leisure the course we ought to adopt in a case so singular and important; but before the kitchen, anglice tea-urn, was brought in, the Laird made his appearance, evidently dressed for some occasion of ceremony.

His coat and waistcoat were of the same snuff colour; the latter with flaps after the manner, but of greater amplitude than the style of the

court dress; his breeches of black silk, rather short and scanty, were adorned at the knees with heir-loom buckles of Bristol stones, set in silver; his stockings were also silk, of a bluish tinge, and a cottonial dimness, the effect of many lavations; his shoes, cleaned by his man Jock, though jet black, yet were more of a lacklustre clothy appearance, than of the satin-like brilliancy of Day and Martin; contrasting finely, however, with the radiance of his richly-chased massive Patagonian silver buckles; he wore his best wig well powdered; a demi-forensic structure of a middle and anomalous architecture, between the prim tye-wig, with Ionic volutes over the ears of a snug and debonair citizen, and the wig of wisdom, luxuriant with corinthian curl, which distinguishes the upper end of a Lord of Council and Session. In the one hand he carried his Sunday hat; a fabrication of the last century, silky and sable—the sides half looped up towards the crown, indicated that it had been formed in that equivocal epoch when the aristocratic cock, yielding to the progress of taste and the march of intellect, was gradually relaxing into the philosophical fashion which

ornaments the craniological organization of the present enlightened age; the other hand grasped his tall malacca cane, crowned with gold and shod with brass. A tassel of black silk, which dangled from the whole above his hand, by its centrifugal force, swept the air with magnificent oscillations as he came staffing his way into the centre of the room.

The first impression of this ceremonious appearance led me to think that the old gentleman had so adorned himself for the purpose of paying a visit of gratitude to the Nabob; and Mrs Soorocks, it would seem, had formed the same opinion, for before even the common salutations were exchanged, she said,—

"Dear me, Mr Mailins, ye can never be going to Nawaubpore's at this time o' the day? he'll be at his dinner—eating his dishes gude for the liver complaint—to be sure, he may excuse the intrusion of an auld-fashion'd man, a hame'art gentleman, who has never seen the world, nor gallanted, like him, wi' the yellow ladies, in yon palaces o' delight in Indy."

"Dinna lift me before I fa', Mrs Soorocks," replied the Laird, evidently not entirely pleased

with her observation; adding, " I am not going to Nawaubpore, but to pay my respects to Grey Stane."

" Grey Stane, Laird? I didna ken that you and the family were on visiting terms," said Mrs Soorocks. " Mrs Luggie is certainly a pleasant woman, and they say Miss Jenny, who cam last week frae the boarding-school at Edinbro', is grown a perfec beauty, and can play on the spinet, and paint red cabbages and kail blades upon paper. It was a better world when a laird's doughter learned to play on the spinnin' wheel, and kent the wholesome use o' kail blades; but nae dou't your visit's a curiosity to see the beauty?"

" Ye're a woman o' sagacity," replied the Laird, "and I'll no deny the truth among frien's; for ever since ye pointed out to me the disconsolateness o' my situation, without a help-meet, I hae been seriously thinking that I wou'd be the better o' a wife."

Here I interposed, exclaiming, " My gracious! Mr Mailings, did you not authorize me to carry a proposal to the ladies of Barenbraes?"

" And," cried Mrs Soorocks, " when I show-

ed the need that ye stood in o' somebody to take care o' you, did I not tell you that Miss Shoosie was the fittest woman in a' this country side for that purpose?"

"But ye ken," said the Laird, addressing himself to us both, "that my heart grewed at the thocht o' ony ane o' the twa reisted auld frights—crined in the flesh, wi' hides like the skin o' a pouket guse, and hues like——denty lions I mean."

"But, Mr Mailings," said I, "I have done my duty, and fulfilled the sacred trust which you confided to me—Miss Shoosie has consented to accept your hand, and share your fortune; and although her sister has some scruples of a mercenary nature, yet your faith and troth are pledged, and to retract now would be most dishonourable."

"Dishonourable!" exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, "it wad be even-doon perfec perjuration—if Dr Lounlans were at hame, and siccan a sinfu' abomination to be committed within the bounds o' the parish, he wad set the session wi' its seven heads and ten horns upon you, and ye hae had some experience o' what it can do. Oh, Mr

Mailings, ye havena the heart within ye to betray the love o' a young woman. Whare div ye think ye'll gang when ye dee?"

The Laird, raked by this cross fire, fell into confusion, and instead of parrying the attack, replied with humility,

"I aye thocht that a man had a richt, at least for ance in his life, to please himsell."

"Please yoursell to be sure," said Mrs Soorocks, "but wi' a discretion—And what discretion wou'd there be in a feckless auld man to marry a gallopin', gallantin', gigglin' Miss in her teens, and to forsake a sober, douce, sensible, agreeable, judicious woman?—I may weel say to you, as Mause, in Patie and Roger, says to Bauldy,—

'Vow and loup back! was e'er the like heard tell?
Swith tak him, Deil, he's ower lang out o' ——.'

I'll no attempt to metre't, but it means the ill place. Deed, Auldbiggings, ye had better repent and sin no more, or ye'll maybe hae Miss Shoosie's death laid to your door, for she's a kind gentle creatur, and canna miss but to die o' a broken heart; and what'll come o' ye then,

when, like the ghost in William and Margett, her spirit appears at your bed fit, with a lily hand and a sable shroud?"

"But," rejoined I, "it is not to the session only he shall answer—it is not only before the injured spectre o' Miss Shoosie that he will lie quaking at the dead of night—he must answer to me. I will not submit, after having been so entreated to negotiate the marriage, to see it so lightly broken off, and for what?—a young girl that has nothing but flesh and blood to recommend her!—Mr Mailings, I consider myself exceedingly ill used."

"Na!" cried Mrs Soorocks, "I canna see hoo ye can be aff fechtin a duel wi' him—and a bonny sicht it would be to see him brocht hame on a barn door, after getting his head shot aff, and Jock, poor cretur, greetin', and following the mournfu' procession, carrying the head by the lug, as if it was no better than a sheep's gaun to the smiddy to be sing't."

The consternation of the Laird was continuing to increase, and looking first at me, and then at his ruthless tormentor, he exclaimed,—

"Have I fallen into the hands o' the Philistines?"

"Philistines!" cried Mrs Soorocks; "Surely ye're an uncircumceesed as weel as a man-sworn deceiver. Had I no mollified Nawaubpore, there would hae been less daffin' in your head the night; for instead of dressing yoursell out like a squire o' high degree, and singing,—'I kiss'd and I prattled with fifty fair maids,' to mak conquests o' bits o' lasses, ye would hae been sitting in your forlorn chair, confabbing wi' Jock, about whether by rope, or gun, was the easiest way o' deeing. But I'll go to the Nabob this precious minute—I'll let him ken what a false deluding man ye are—I'll tell him o' the plague ye were to the kirk session, before Mr Firlot got ye to right that amiable ill-used woman your first wife, and the wrongeous mischief ye would noo do to the sweet girl whom Providence has made me an instrument to choose for your second."

This last threat finished the Laird; he lay back in his chair with his eyes fixed on one of the bell cranks, his arms hanging as it were

powerless by his sides, and every feature of his face relaxed with helplessness.

"I canna," said he, in soliloquy, "warstle wi' this—I hae lang thole't the consperacy that has sookit my rents—I hae endur't the loss o' my first love, Annie Daisie—I quietly submitted to my first wife till it pleased Providence to quench her—I hae seen the lands o' my forefathers mouldering awa—I hae known the terrors o' the law, and the judgment o' a wadset—I hae had sickness o' heart, and the rheumatics, and the toothach—weel may I say wi' the play-actor in the show that I allowit in our barn,—

'But it's this too solid flesh which makes the calamity of life,
For who would bear the pangs of despised love—
The oppressor's wrong—the insolence of law?'

The deevil take Hugh Caption, and all the other ills that flesh is heir to—I'm ruin't beyond redemption—Mrs Soorocks, and sir—I gie myself up into your hands—be pitiful, if ye can."

CHAPTER XXVII.

After the departure of the Laird and Mrs Soorocks, I set myself quietly down to read the newspapers of the morning. Lugged as it were forth from my accustomed privacy, I felt myself involved within the influence of a vortex, pregnant with events to the worthies of my immediate neighbourhood. Changes, at least for a while, are lightsome; and really I confess, that I was not a little tickled with the surrounding aspect of affairs; Miss Shoosie, Miss Girzie, and Mrs Soorocks on one side, threatening matrimony against the Laird, and his man standing "in defense," on the other; while the Nabob Dominie Tansie, and myself, put now and then a finger in the pie; keeping ever and anon a watchful eye on trig Leezie, that Abigail, running blackfoot between the skirmishing parties.

Half abstracted in these picturesque ruminations, I had just commenced an immeasurable leading article, the first sentences of which were redolent of Mavrocordato, Ulysses, Lord Byron, and the Greek Committee, when I was roused from my reveries by the thunder of the Nabob's chariot at my door.

I was much surprised at this avatar, and no less at the friendly and familiar courtesy with which the Great Man addressed me.

"I have come," said he, "to talk to you about a very comical affair, in which I may stand in need of some assistance, and you are the only man of any sense in the county."

"Then you have never been in Greenock, I presume?"

"O yes, I have though! A very good sort of a town—plenty of punch, and much jaw—quite edifying to hear the excellent character every one there gives of his neighbour—they have some fun too among them—one John Esdaile has long served them instead of Joe Miller—but I have no time at present to send for my friend the bailie; besides, he's not very port-

able, and I have left all my elephants in Bengal, where I had one that could have carried him."

I was here so shocked at this personality, that I almost fainted. I entreated him to forbear, and endeavoured to recall him from the digression into which he had so much the habit of falling, although he might have excused the objectionable expression by making an apology, as is usual in such occasions.

"Why, the business," said he, "is nothing less than a claim on more than half my fortune. I had a friend in India, one Tom Bayfield, who rose to the rank of Colonel in the Company's service; he married one day a very pretty girl, the daughter of my old chum Dick Campbell—they were very happy, and got three children between them—Tom was a devilish clever fellow, made upwards of ten lacs—and died suddenly—I was in Europe at the time, but in making his will he left me his executor, and, failing his own children, his heir—for I had lent him a helping hand when he was only a cadet. Somebody, however, put mischief into the widow's head against me, as if her children had been cheated by this settlement, and she wrote

me such vixen letters that I told her, but in polite terms, that she might go to the d—l; although out of regard for her husband I did intend to adopt her son. Well, as ill luck would have it, on receiving my letter, she was advised by some of her nincompoop relations in Bengal to ship herself and family for Europe; when, if she had staid till a decent time after her husband's death, she would certainly have got married again—but the ship was lost at sea, and it was supposed that every soul on board perished, so that I administered as heir to the Colonel. But the deuce is in't, there has been with me this afternoon a confounded impostor, as I think, who says that he was in the ship with Mrs Bayfield and her family; that the vessel was not lost, but burned; and that he had saved her son Charles, whom I had intended to adopt; and what do you think? he brought a great lubberly boy, whom he called Charles, and who was no more like the babe that I saw in the arms of the Ayah when I left India, than an Arab is like a Caffrè; but certainly, considering the time that has elapsed since I saw the child, it may have grown up to something like the size of the

impostor's brat. Now, what would you advise me to do in such circumstances? I don't want such proofs as the old Humbugs and Vakeels in Edinburgh would require; but before a man parts with one half of his property just now, and makes up his mind to leave the other at his death, it is but reasonable that he should know what he's about, and to whom he either gives the *one*, or leaves the *other*. My friend Dr Dewai came home with a large fortune, a writer's wife in Dundee palmed herself on him as his near relation, and got the old fool to leave her a legacy of ten thousand pounds; but when he died, and her husband had got the money, it turned out that her mother had been his mother's chambermaid, and so got acquainted with the secrets and connexion of the family.—How d—d foolish I should look, if it were discovered after my death that I had been as silly as Dewai! I never knew such a silly fellow as Dewai. When I was resident at Lucknow, he was surgeon to the Residency."——

Apprehensive that the Nabob was again digressing from the matter in hand, I brought him back to the point, by asking if he had exa-

mined the stranger as to any evidence in his possession of the facts he affected to state.

"O, to do the fellow justice," replied the Nabob, "his story is plausible enough; and he says he has some letters of my own to Mrs Bayfield; but which, out of regard for the boy he calls Charles, he will only show in the presence of witnesses.—I like the fellow for his caution. I want, however, you, and that very sensible lady, Mrs Soorocks, to come over in the morning, and tiff at Nawaubpore to-morrow, when we shall meet the fellow, and will be able to say something more about it. 'Tis a d—d hard case, however, to be plucked so unexpectedly, and that too by one whom the unconscionable sea has given up, as it would seem, for the express purpose. It puts me in mind of a story which once happened in Calcutta. An officer was going up the country, and somewhere above Cossembazar, his budgerow was upset, and the Doudies all drowned; he was himself ashore at the time, and so escaped. When he found what had happened, his business being urgent, he got to the nearest village, where he procured some kind of conveyance to a station, and proceeded

by Dawk. The vessel, however, was picked up; and as he had not been heard of, it was presumed he had perished with the rest. So his agents in Calcutta immediately mounted black waistcoats, and entered a probat to his will. But lo and behold, they received a letter from their late friend, dated at Agra, stating that as he had lost all his *Shraub* by the upsetting of his budgerow, he would thank them to send a fresh supply."

Here I found it necessary again to interrupt the Burrah Sahib, by saying, that I would not fail to be with him at the time proposed—asking him at the same time, if he would take something after his ride.

"Thank ye, my good sir," said he, "I'll take a glass of Brandy Pawney, as the evening's hot."

I immediately ordered the brandy and some spring-water fresh from the well. While preparing the beverage, he resumed—

"The would-be-genteel coxcombs of Calcutta scout Brandy Pawney as vulgar, but we old sportsmen of the Mafussil know better than that comes to.

"There's my worthy friend old Sir Thomas. When he came round to Calcutta, he took up his quarters with old Frank at Barrackpore. Now the old peer always kept lots of the very best wines, chiefly French, and other thin potations, that did not at all suit the tone of Sir Tom's stomach; and still, by way of kindness, Frank used to press him to drink every wine on the table. The Knight was obliged to comply from politeness; but often, while swilling the well-cooled stuff, he would sigh for his old friend the brandy-bottle. One day he got to Calcutta, and slipping quietly on board of a Drughy, he pushed off for the ship which had brought him round from Bombay, and declared to the captain that he was apprehensive of a gangrene in his bowels from the gallons of sour trash he had swallowed; and though it was only two o'clock P. M. the brace of them sat down, and finished their gin-tumblers a-piece, which the gentleman declared was the saving of his life.—O, it's a famous thing Brandy Pawney. Dr Jock, my worthy friend, recommended it both by precept and example.—By the by, Jock sent me out some of the d—d black draught

he's so fond of, when I some time ago felt myself bilious and queery; but as I was well before it arrived, I thought it a pity such good stuff should be thrown to the dogs; so I ordered a dose of it for my best China pig, for it was then slightly indisposed, as a Cockney would say—And do you know it poisoned her? She died within the hour—D—d lucky I did not take it myself."

Here the Nabob having finished his tumbler, rose, and requesting me not to forget my appointment, adding that he would send his carriage to fetch Mrs Soqrocks, bade me good night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I WENT by times next morning to the residence of Mrs Soorocks; but on approaching the house, discovered many signs which indicated that the Lady could not conveniently accompany me. It was washing-day, and the little grass-plat within the sweetbriar-hedge between her house and the high-road, was covered with all manner of female and household drapery. Ropes fastened in various directions to the iron-railing, the lilac-trees, and the bolts and bars of the window-shutters, were festooned with shifts, sheets, and night-gowns, fixed on by split pieces of wood feruled with tin; napkins and towels were spread upon the rose and gooseberry bushes; and the large table-cloth, so admired at her New-year's-day festivals, for its damasked views of Amsterdam in Holland, and other

foreign cities, hung upon a special cord, like a mainsail, between the lime and the rowan-tree across the path leading to the front door. Access at one entrance being thus shut out, I was obliged to go round to the back of the house, the great scene of the operations of the day.

In front of the wash-house, with kilted petticoats, our old acquaintance Leezy ravishingly "lap and flang" in a washing-tub, the spray of which enveloping her in a mist, made her appear like a tutelar goddess amidst the spouting tritons of a Parisian fountain.

Deep within the steamy-shade of the wash-house, the full round physiognomy of the cook, like the moon in a mist, loomed through the rising vapours; and in the darkness beyond, Jean Japples, the hired washerwoman, stood elevated on a tripod, like another Medea over the cauldron, renovating the contents of it with an ex-broomstick.

Not seeing Mrs Soorocks, I turned round to inquire at Leezy for her mistress; but at the same moment, the lady herself made her appearance, in dishevelled morning garments, with a watering-pan in her hand. On seeing

me, she set it down; and coming forward, begged that I would walk into the house. I explained, however, on the spot, the object of my visit, and the wish of the Nabob that she would accompany me; "but I see," said I, "that it is a pleasure I cannot expect to-day."

"It's vera true," was the reply; "for we're thrang, and in confusion wi' our summer washing; it's just extraordinar what a family files in the course o' half a year, forbye the plague o' sma' claes atween hands—but it's a trouble you men are never fash'd wi', and some of ye even laugh at us drudging-women. My dear Mr Soorocks used to say, in his jocosity, that twa washings were equal to one white-washing, twa whitewashings to one flitting, and twa flittings to one fire.—Really, I'm fash'd that I canna go wi' you, and I wad fain stretch a point, if it were possible, for the Nabob's cold collations are verra nice, and he's himsell so much o' the gentleman.—But, dear me, is na that his carriage coming alang the road—It's no in possibility to come up to the door, and I hae naebody to gang to the yett to speak to that gran fitman.—Leezy, put yoursell right—step out o' the boyne as

fast as you're able, and say I'm dressing; for I maun go noo, since he has sent the coach on purpose."

Accordingly, while Leezy went round to the gate, taking time to adjust her own apparel, which was no more in a state to receive visitors, than that of her mistress, Mrs Soorocks went into the house, and in less time than could reasonably have been expected, (she is a clever woman,) returned adorned for the visit.

As soon as we were seated in the carriage, I related with some degree of minuteness, what the Nabob had told me of the state of his feelings towards the family of Colonel Bayfield.

"Weel," said the lady, at the conclusion, "I aye said that Nawaubpore had a generous heart, for a' his vanity and ostentation; but it will be a dreadfu' thing if a man like him—so kind a neighbour, and who may be a blessing to the country-side—should be impoverished by an impostor. I'll no soon forget the genteel way he pardoned, at my intercession, that daized remnant Auldbiggings; and maybe in requesting me to be present this day at the precogni-

tion, it may be put in my power to return his condescension."

"But surely, Mrs Soorocks, if the case is clearly made out that the boy is the son of Colonel Bayfield, you would not think of intercepting the just intentions of Mr Rupees?"

"If's a word o' power—It's no in the course o' nature, sir, that a ship burned at sea, and all hands on board perished, should send forth a leevin' witness to contradict the fact."

"True; but it would appear that all on board had not perished."

"Now that's what I'll no credit; and I'll gie you the reason of my misdoubt. Wha's the testimony?—A land-louper that naebody kens onything about.—Ah, sir, if ye had sic experience of the devices of man that I hae had, ye wadna be sae credulous. A man comin' out o' the deep like a Robinson Crusoe, wi' a white Friday, to claim awa' the biggest half o' a gentleman's fortune—it's just a thing for playactors, and the likes o' Sir Walter, to mak' a clishmaclaver o'; but amang people o' understanding, it will be seen through, as a contrivance begotten in sin, and brought forth in iniquity."

"There are many circumstances in the story," said I, "singular and almost improbable, I admit. But Mr Coball, the stranger, appeared to me a man of unaffected sincerity—warm in his feelings, and simple in his manners."

"Simple manners! Verily, verily, that shows how an author may be versed in books, but scant of experience respecting the multifarious crookednesses of a wicked world. Did ye no hear o' the leesin' makin' that I was made the innocent victim o', nae farther gane than last year, when the ne'er-do-weel wi' a blackit face came through the kintra, makin' a wally-waeing about how he was blawn up in a bombshell by the Algerines. I had my doots o' the story when he cam to my door, though he made it be as very true like a tale, as your condisciple from the uttermost ends o' the earth tells his; but no to be thought a'thegither hard-hearted, I put doon a sixpence in his book o' beggary, wi' my name til't, and what do ye think the graceless Gehazi did? He gaed to Widow M'Plooky's public, and waur'd the sixpence on gills; so waurin' the sixpence on gills, he forged ten shillings before my sixpence, makin' it look in the book like half-a-guinea.

Then he gaed to Mrs Scuitles, and she seeing my name doon for ten shillings and sixpence, and knowing me for a woman o' moderate means, and o' a sifting and discerning spirit, she put doon hersel for a whole guinea. Syne he gaed to auld Leddy Roughills, and she, no to be behint hand, gied him another guinea; and then he ventured to my lord's, wha wi' his dochters could do nae less than double the example. But as he was on his way to the Nabob, the drink, for of course he had been dry by the way, took his head, and he fell on the road at the toll, where he was kent, and there brought to light, for in dighting his face, he dighted aff the cork coom, and stood before the toll-keeper a bare-faced malefactor. Think what I was obliged to endure, wi' the wite o' being such a simpleton as to gie him such a lovegift largess; ye see what it is to believe stories o' folk blawn up in the air, and what ye're like to get for your pains."

"You have certainly assigned, Mrs Soorocks, very good and sufficient reasons for doing nothing rashly; I have, however, no apprehension that Mr Rupees will suffer himself to be easily deceived."

"He'll no be alloo'd were he ever sae willing, if I hae ony voice—It wou'd be even-doon compos mentos to give ear to the tale o' a Jonah frae the whale's belly; but whisht, whisht, for here's the house, and there's ane o' the heathens leadin' Mr Caption's whuskey to the stables. Weel, I'm glad o' that; indeed it wasna to be thocht that a man o' judgment and sensibility like Nawaubpore, would be content on sic an occasion wi' the like o' you, or even me, to bear witness."

CHAPTER XXIX.

On being shown into the library, we found already before us Mr Coball, with a small red-leather brass-nailed trunk in his hand, and the boy at his side seated on a sofa. The Nabob was at the writing-table opposite, with Mr Caption at his right hand. The reception of Mrs Soorocks was particularly gracious, nor had I cause to complain of any deficiency of heartiness in mine.

The proceedings were opened by a summary statement of the whole story from the Nabob, who on this occasion showed both his shrewdness and good sense as a man of business; he made no digressions, but concluded with requesting Mr Coball to produce his vouchers.

The red case was accordingly unclosed, and the letters laid on the table. The Nabob took

them up one by one; and having looked at them carefully, was on the point, as I thought, of acknowledging at once their authenticity, when Mr Caption said, who probably thought the same thing:—

"It is not enough to be certain as to the writing—look at the paper, the seals do not appear to me as if they were exact impressions of an original seal."

The Nabob knit his brows, but made no answer.

Here Mrs Soorocks stepped forward, and lifting one of the letters, looked at the seal, and said—

"It's my opinion this is no wax at a', but fiddler's rosett, wi' gold foilzie in't, and oh it is waff paper.—Nawaubpore, ye wad never write your letters on huxtry tea-paper."

The Nabob, smiling, shook his head, and Mrs Soorocks looked to me with a triumphant countenance.

"Any dishonest servant," said Caption, "might become possessed of such papers, admitting, for the sake of argument, that they may be genuine."

"True," replied Mr Coball; "but such letters do not appear, from anything in their contents, to have been worth the stealing."

"Hoo can ye tell what a covetous-minded servant wad think worth stealing?" cried Mrs Soorocks eagerly. "I had a servant-lass that stole one of Mr Soorocks' Greek books. What use could a Greek book be to her? But she confessed that she did steal it.—There's no telling what dishonest servants will do."

The Nabob interposed.

"The letters are mine," said he; and turning to the lady, added jocularly, "As to the wax, I know it well, I bought it at Hazaribaug; and the paper is Chinese, I brought from India with me. Moreover, on reference to my Dawk-book now before me, I find that the dates agree."

"But," he added, addressing himself to Mr Coball, "it is strange that you should have obtained possession of these letters only—Have you nothing else? for they prove nothing as to the identity of the boy there."

"With these letters," replied Mr Coball, "were several valuable trinkets, and two packets of pearls."

" And what have you done with them ?" cried Caption eagerly.—" 'Tis easy to say so."

" He'll hae made awa' wi' them," said Mrs Soorocks, in half a whisper to me.

" No, madam," replied Mr Coball, who had overheard her ; " they are here," and he laid the packets and trinkets on the table.

Caption was evidently confounded, while the Nabob's countenance brightened.

" But I canna see," resumed Mrs Soorocks, " hoo a wheen gew-gaws can prove that black's white, or, ony mair than the letters, mak it a bit clearer that this bairn's no anither."

" Certainly not, madam," said Mr Caption firmly—" Certainly not, you are quite right."

" I thocht I wad be sae," said Mrs Soorocks, and she looked significantly.

The Nabob in the meantime was examining the trinkets ; and I observed that he noticed a necklace with particular attention.

Mr Coball at this crisis took out of the trunk a small neat pocket memorandum-book, and presented it open to the Nabob, saying—

" I think this must have been a diary which Mrs Bayfield was keeping of our voyage—the

last entry is the date of the very day preceding that night on which our calamity happened."

"I acknowledge," said the Nabob, at the first glance, "that the writing appears to be Mrs Bayfield's."

"But what does that prove?" said Mr Caption.

"You will find," said the stranger calmly, "that my name, James Coball, is mentioned in a list of the passengers at the beginning."

Here Mrs Soorocks begged to look at the list.

"To be sure," said she, "there is the name of a James Coball; but whar's the proof that ye are that James Coball, or that ye are a James Coball at a'?"

The stranger looked confused.

"Yes," cried Caption, "where is the evidence of that fact?"

No immediate answer was given; but after a short pause, Mr Coball answered—

"I think sufficient evidence has been produced, to convince any honest man that there is truth enough in my story to induce the executor of the late Colonel Bayfield to examine the whole circumstances, although there is not

enough to make the heir in possession of Colonel Bayfield's property surrender to this boy; but when I add, that several of those who were saved with us in the boat, and particularly the officer, to whom we were all so much indebted, are alive, and I believe are at this time in England, it would seem to me that beyond a decent investigation of the facts there would be little honour or honesty in resisting the claim."

The Nabob looked at me and said—

"He's an honest man, after all."

"Dinna be deceived, Nawaubpore," exclaimed Mrs Soorocks; "for there's mair depends upon this matter, than being beguiled wi' a blackened ne'er-do-weel as I was, ye ken, last year."

The Nabob turned to Caption.—"Ought we not immediately to institute an inquiry to find those witnesses?"

"No, sir," replied Caption, with a professional smirk—"No, sir, the *onus probandi* lies with this gentleman, who hath spontaneously placed himself *in loco parentis* to the infant."

"Ye're a man o' observation, Mr Caption," cried Mrs Soorocks, her countenance brighten-

ing with satisfaction—"Ye're a man o' observation. I'll say naething concerning the sincerity o' lawyers' bosoms; but I aye thocht there was something in your head, whatever ill-natured folks might say to the contrair."

The lawyer took no notice of this remark, which, like most of the good lady's compliments, cut both ways, but resumed—

"It is not to be expected that the respondent is to furnish the pursuer with evidence; even the Jury Court would hardly require anything so unreasonable."

"But, Mr Caption," said the Nabob, "it may turn out in this case that I am both plaintiff and defendant; and all I require is full and sufficient proof; for another heir may make his appearance. I wish I had Craigdarroch with me to set us on a proper train; but, d—n him, he's doing patriot just now, and humbugging the nincompoops of the Stewardry. If we had him even fresh from one of his election-dinners, I should be content, for I have known him after a hard drink, and before going to bed, give a clearer and sounder opinion than any of his bre-

thren could after a light supper and a sober sleep. He once conducted a case for me——"

"Na," interrupted Mrs Soorocks, "if he's a man o' that discernment, he'll do us some credit in the Parliament-house, and that's mair than can weel be said of a' 'the chosen five-and-forty.'"

The Nabob here rejoined,—

"This business, my dear lady, promises no good to your friend the Laird; for, in duty to myself, it will be necessary to foreclose his mortgage immediately.—Caption, you will take no notice of my note of last night, desiring you to stay the proceedings against Mr Mailings."

"Very well, sir," replied Caption—"misjudged lenity, as I said; but as your order was in writing, you will be pleased instruct me in writing to the contrary effect."

"Oh, Mr Roopy,—(Nawaubpore, as I should say,)"—exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, "haud your han', and be melted to tender mercies, or what will become o' the puir auld man? Work he canna, and want he maunna—he'll be a burden upon us all, and little do you ken o' the woe ye may bring upon a most excellent woman; for

he's on the point of marriage wi' Miss Shoosie Minnigaff, ane o' the amiable leddies o' Barenbraes. She'll dee o' a broken heart, if she does na lay violent hauns on hersell."

This sad and gentle appeal, instead of producing the desired effect on the Nabob, only served to make him burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Married! the old guddah! and to one of those cameleopards too! Who the devil contrived this hopeful union? It must have been yourself, Mrs Soorocks; for it never could have entered into the heart of man—of any man—to marry a crane—an adjutant is corpulent, compared to her. Why, my good lady, if the worst comes to the worst, he can only simply be starved; but if your benevolent scheme were accomplished, he would be starved, and pecked to boot.—But this long sederunt, as you would call it, Mr Caption, will go well nigh to starve us all, so I shall order dinner.—Mr Coball, do you, as soon as possible, procure the necessary evidence. You may rest assured, that there shall be no unnecessary or vexatious delay on my

part—only make good your proofs, and I shall be delighted to do justice to the son of my old friend."

" Na," said Mrs Soorocks aside to me, " the man's demented. Did ye ever hear o' sic a distracted action? To give up a property—and sic a property—without being obligated according to law? I ken advocates in Embro', Nawaubpore, that could keep the case in Court for a' your days. There's my frien'—but I'll mention nae names."

Here dinner was announced, and we adjourned to the banqueting-room.

CHAPTER XXX.

NEXT morning, agreeably to an appointment which I had made with Mrs Soorocks, as we came home together in the Nabob's carriage, I went over to her house to carry her with me on an expiatory visit to the ladies of Barenbraes. We had agreed that the decision of the Nabob's character, notwithstanding his vanity and foibles, was such as left no hope he would again recede from his determination to foreclose the mortgage on the lands of Auldbiggings; I had therefore urged her with all my powers of persuasion to call with me on the venerable sisters in our way home; the cares, however, of her great washing pressed heavily on her mind, and she could not at the time think of consenting; but, to do her justice, she evinced no reluctance to make an ample apology to Miss

Shoosie; and in consequence, it was agreed that the ceremony thereof should be deferred till the following day.

On the day following, accordingly, I went to her house, and we walked leisurely on together.

"I'm thinkin'," said she, as we got on the footpath of the high-road—"I'm thinkin' that the auld man, if we were to forsake him now, would be a perfec object; but I feel that we are agents, raised up as it were like babes and sucklings, to bring him out o' the house o' bond age, the which, in my opinion, is the debtor's-hole in the tolbooth, if waur than captivity were not to be his lot."

"I agree, ma'am, in all you say. It is most consolatory to think that we are both afforded an opportunity to show how mankind are capable of doing a disinterested action."

"I'll mak' nae rouse o' mysell," replied the lady; "but I ken the secrets o' my own breast; and tho' I dinna wish to lightly your loving-kindness towards Auldbiggings, I hae a notion it may be something like a bit spunk o' curiosity that has helped to heat the zeal o' your disinterestedness; for I have remarked—I mean

nae offence—that ye hae a particular pleasure in lookin' into the catastrophes o' ither folks. For my part, I am thankfu' to walk wi' a humble heart and a contrite spirit; for if good come o' my sma' endeavour, sure am I that nane o' the merit thereof can be attributed to me."

Thus piously discoursing, we plodded onward to the door of Barenbraes; and as it was agreed between us, I entered first, and thus opened the business:—

"Ladies, I have brought with me a person whom we have all great reason to esteem. Ever since she had the misfortune to incur your displeasure, she has been the most wretched of womankind,—she comes to confess a fault, to acknowledge a sin, and if you require it, even on bended knees, to kiss the hems o' your garments——"

"In a figurative sense," interrupted Mrs Soorocks.

But I waved my hand to her to be quiet, and continued:—

"Miss Girzie, I have long respected your prudence, and valued your excellent sense; so

I told our mutual friend here, that although her offence was of very great enormity——"

"Enormity! her assurance was large," cried Miss Shoosie.

"Yes, Miss Shoosie, her imprudence was large, indeed, but her repentance is without measure——"

"In a certain sense," said Mrs Soorocks.

"But," continued I, "it would be idle to waste words on ladies of your piety, were I to attempt to urge that this was a case for the exercise of the Christian grace of forgiveness. If Mrs Soorocks be hasty in temper, and rash in tongue, you know, Miss Girzie, that you have the failing of sometimes giving provocation; and Miss Shoosie, mild as ye are, which my friend Mr Mailings regards as the greatest grace of your gentle sex, yet you know that there are times when the best of us may err, and even when you yourself——"

"If," interrupted Miss Shoosie, "Mrs Soorocks has come to beg my pardon, she'll find that I'll no be insensible to the dishonour she has brought upon hersell."

"She comes to beg your pardon; but you

must not use such words as dishonour when we are treating of peace.—Mrs Soorocks, do you ask pardon of the ladies?—Ladies, do you on your part acknowledge that faults are on both sides? For, in the exercise of a sound discretion, reciprocal concession is what I would recommend to all."

"Weel, leddies," said Mrs Soorocks, "since it maun be sae, what can we do but submit? tho' I think, Miss Shoosie, ye give baith the sore stroke and the loud cry; howsever, since it's a' past, and we're frien's again——"

"Friends!" cried Miss Girzie, with an English accent—"Friends! we may forgive what's past, but I see no obligation for us to be friends."

"Come, come, ladies, neighbours should be neighbour-like," said I; "and, Miss Shoosie, if you knew the cause that has brought Mrs Soorocks here to-day, instead of standing so far aloof from reconciliation, you would embrace her in your arms, and press her to your heart. She has been explaining to me the mournful situation of Mr Mailings."

"It's no my fault," interposed Miss Shoosie; "for if ye had waited to hear what me and my

sister were going to say the other night, you would never have thocht us such mercenary women as to have broken off with a gentleman like Mr Mailings for the lucre o' gain."

"Na," said Mrs Soorocks, "considering the jeopardy that you and Miss Girzie are in, o' a sudden retribution frae your sister, Leddy Chandos, like a thief in the night, ye wad hae been waur than mad had ye made a hesitation; for oh, it rins before me, like the shadow o' a forthcoming judgment upon ye, Miss Shoosie, the terrible day that the cry o' Justice, wi' the scales in her ae hand, and the sword in her ither, will be heard afore your door, and plack and bawbee to the uttermost will be required aff ye. I canna imagine, leddies, what makes you swither."

"We dinna swither; but we would act prudently."

"Ca' ye't acting prudently, in your situation, to risk the loss of a most estimable man's affections for what canna be modesty, Miss Shoosie? you surely hae lived ower lang in the world to ken what modesty means between fifty and threescore.—Leddies, leddies, I maun use the

freedom o' an auld frien' wi' ye—yere tyning your time. Just come ower the night, and tak' your tea wi' me, and I'll send for Mr Mailings; and as Nawaubpore's a Justice o' the Peace, I dinna misdout his coming, and we'll get the marriage put out o' haun'——"

Miss Shoosie cast down her eyes as she replied,—

"I could never think of such a rash step."

"Oh! Mrs Soorocks," exclaimed Miss Girzie, "it's what I never could alloo,—twa clandestine marriages in my father's family—oh no!"

"You are quite right, Miss Girzie, it would make folk expect a third."

"But," said Mrs Soorocks, "noo, when I think o't, it might occasion malicious insinuations, to the great damage and detriment of Miss Shoosie's fair fame, considering the well-known and long-tried affection subsisting between her and the Laird; so I'll no insist; but come to your tea, and I'll hae Mr Mailings o' the party, when we can arrange a' about the booking and the buying o' your bridal braws, since ye will hae a regular marriage."

Having thus established peace, and arranged,

as I had supposed, the business of the evening, and being regaled with the ladies' home-made wine, Mrs Soorocks and I bade them adieu, and bent our steps towards Auldbiggings. Before we had, however, reached the bottom of the avenue, we observed Jock coming from the house, like an ostrich at full speed, his arms swinging in the air, and his skirts streaming behind. As he drew near, horror and consternation were legible in his countenance, and in one hand he held a letter, which he gave to me, before he could collect breath to explain the burden of his haste. As the shortest means of discovering the motive of his speed, I opened the letter, and read as follows:—

"To MALACHI MAILINGS, Esquire of Auldbiggings.

"SIR,

"I am instructed by my client, Mr Walter Rupees of Nawaubpore, to beg your attention to my last, dated 3d current; and further to state, that if satisfaction is not rendered thereto *quam primum*, diligence will immediately issue.

"I am further instructed, with respect to the matter of the interest due last money, and *toties quoties* called for, to request an answer *quam primum*.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient Servant,
"HUGH CAPTION."

By this time Jock had recovered his breath, and said,—

"Weel, ye see the last trumpet's now blawn, —what's to be done?—is't no possible to get a respite till the lottery be drawn?—The Laird's just gane bye himsell—he's toddlin' but and toddlin' ben the house, whiles wringin' his hauns, and whiles makin' murgeons as if he was speakin'.—It was a better world when gentlemen werena fash'd wi' law.—I'm sure the ten commandments are worth a' the King's statutes, and ye'll no fin' a word in them about payin' o' debts, e'en an ye were able.—I'm just wud to think o' the mischief that this law—law—law has brocht upon poor Scotland!—But oh! I'm glad to see you and Mrs Soorocks,—ye'll be a great cordial to him under his calamity; and

oh, mem, dinna mak' your charity on the present occasion a bit and a buffet wi't; but speak him kindly, for oh, he's helpless, and far past the power o' Jenny Clatterpans and me to gie him ony comfort, even though we baith fleeched him, and clapped him on the shoothers, yin at every side, to tak anither tumbler o' toddy; for hath not Solomon said, in the words of Robie Burns,—

'Gie him strong drink until he wink,
That's sinkin' in despair?'

Blyth was I when I saw you comin'; but when ye gang to the house, dinna let wot that ye hae seen me, or ken onything about what's gaun to happen; for our Laird was aye proud, and this misfortune has made him a perfect turkey-cock for pride,—he storm'd at Jenny Clatterpans and me for our kindness, and push'd us awa, and wonder'd hoo we daured to be sae familiar wi' our master; crying out—a wee delecrit as I thocht—that had it no been for the poortith come upon him, we would never hae been sae upsetting; and he wyted it a' on the liberty and equality speerit o' the times, and the

taxes, and the high wages, that were grindin' the rightfu' gentry frae aff the face o' the earth.—Noo, dear sir and mem, I beg and beseech that ye'll speak him kindly, and mak' much o' him, for oh, he's grown thin-skinned!—Mrs Soorocks, he canna thole a taunt noo!"

This sad account of the Laird's condition, had the effect of embarrassing us both; and on leaving the simple and faithful creature, we proceeded towards "The Place," without exchanging a word, or making a single comment on what we had heard.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On approaching the door, Jenny Clatterpans was standing there, and from time to time she looked towards the garden; the other maid was also visible behind her, and every now and then took a peep in the same direction. The aspect of Jenny was visibly troubled, nor did her companion's wear a more tranquil expression ;but still the countenances of both betokened something which commanded deference to their feelings.

Whether Mrs Soorocks felt exactly as I did, it were impossible to determine by anything in her voice or gestures, but she abruptly left me and went towards the maids. At the same moment I happened to turn round, and discovered the Laird walking to and fro in the garden, with his hands behind, his eyes perusing the grass of

the walks, and his whole figure, by the bend and by the solemnity of his air, indicating the perplexity of his spirit.

I went immediately towards him, none displeased at that moment to be relieved from the presence of Mrs Soorocks. I put on the blithest face I could assume, and tuned my voice to cheerfulness as I drew near to the dejected old man. But although he saw me coming, and nodded in his wonted familiar manner as I approached the walk which he was pacing, he soon relapsed into his reverie, and moved along unconscious of being so observed.

I stopped some ten or fifteen yards from him; I looked forward, and the distress of his mind, though visibly mingled with a strong ingredient of absurdity, was yet such as could not be seen without sympathy.

As he walked along the dark unmowed grass, he paused suddenly, and stooping forward, he pulled a rose.

"It's my ain yet," said he with a smile, as he turned round, and smelling it, held it out towards me.

"It has grown in my forefathers' land," he

added; "I set it mysell—I made the hole for't wi' my ain very fingers—I watered it wi' the china jug, that was my father's punch porringer, as I hae heard my kind mother say—and what can be a man's ain, if that bush and bud be na mine?"

Then he moved some four or five paces, and tearing the flower into pieces, he scattered the petals around, and knitting his brows and clenching his hands, he rushed with his left hand extended, as if he entreated and deprecated some afflicting power, revealed in form only to himself. It is the peculiar characteristic of all grief-ful emotions to move and gesticulate with the left arm, as in like manner it is for those of power and exertion to indicate their predominance by the energy and emphasis of the right.

When that brief paroxysm had subsided, he returned leisurely and sedately towards the spot where I was standing.

"Is there no a possible o' ony kind, by the which this may be eschewed?"

He seemed to think by the expression, that I must of course be acquainted with the cause and sources of his trouble, and had his pertur-

bation been less obviously painful, perhaps I might have played a little with his perplexities, but his look was so vacant and infantine, that it was impossible to regard him with any other sentiment than pity.

"I understand," said I, "that the Nabob has resolved to follow out his determination. I am sorry for it, but his own condition half pleads in extenuation of his rigour."

"It was a luckless day," was the answer, "when the thread of my life was ravelled wi' his knotty thrums—my lot and station, though lanerly, was lown—I had nae law fashin' me, but only an uncertainty about a bit heritable bond, that in a sense wasna worth the speaking about.—Noo, I'm driven to desperation.—There's that limb o' Satan, Caption, greetin' in the king's name—there's John Angle, the surveyor, demanding a compensation—and there's that goolden image o' Nebuchadnedzor, Rupees—Oh, oh, and alas! if I wasna preserved, I wud droon mysell.—My book I canna write—to work I'm no able—the curse o' Gilbert, when he was a beggar man, has overtaken me; for

when the three pound in the desk-head is spent and gone, I'll no hae a penny left for a morsel —I'm a destitute creature—I'm a forlorn auld man—I'm a verra object—Oh, I'm an object!"

I endeavoured to console him as well as I could, but the sense of desolation was so strong upon him that the endeavour was ineffectual.

"It's a terrible thing," cried he, "for a man to be miserable.—O, Adam and Eve, ye hae muckle to answer for.—If I was young, I would be a sodger. Were my mind composed, I could write an instructin' book. Had I been bred a tailor, I could have made claes; but I canna even sing ballats; for Heaven in its displeasure made me wi' a timmer tune. I can do naething but beg. I'll no can lang even gang frae door to door; for I'm auld, and I hae an income in my leg—I'll hae to sit on a stane on the road-side, wi' a ragged hat on my knee, and my bare grey head in the shower—Heaven preserve me, will I be sittin' beggin' at my ain yett!"—

The last sentence was uttered with a tone of horror that made me shudder, and I said,—

"Mr Mailings, do not give way to such

frightful presentiments; I beseech you to be more composed."

"I'll be put in a prison," cried he—"I'll be fastened doon wi' an airn chain in the debtor's-hole—but what will they mak' by that? for I hae naething—the dyvor's bill can do nae gude to a failed and broken-hearted auld beggar man—To be sure, I might steal cocks and hens, and be sent to Botany Bay; but what could I do there.—O dear, I wish I was in another world, for my use and part in this world is done now."

He then walked away from me, and continued for several minutes pacing another part of the garden. Sometimes he halted and raised his hand, as if he were arguing with himself; anon he quickened his pace, and at last he turned briskly round, and came rushing towards me with exultation in his countenance.

"I hae found a redemption," he exclaimed. "I'll marry Miss Shoosie Minnigaff. She has goold in goupens. I hae heard my mither say there wasna sic a plenished napery-kist as the ane at Barenbraes in a' the west o' Scotland; and if I dinna like her, ye ken, she'll hae the

means of providing hersell wi' a separate maintenance."

So intense had been the distress of the old man, that I really felt as it were relieved, when he proposed to adopt this sinister and sordid expedient; and in consequence—it may be not in a spirit of the purest morality—I applauded his resolution, and began to commend the merits and qualities of the lady with many a magnifying augmentative.

At this juncture, Mrs Soorocks joined us; it was evident by her manner as she approached, that the servants had very sensibly affected her compassion, and her exhilaration was at least equal to mine, when I told her that the Laird had resolved to marry Miss Shoosie.

"It's a wark—" said he, however, with a sigh.

"And of mercy to yoursell, Laird, that ye'll alloo. But no to mak mair clishmaclaver about it, I expect my friend Bailie Waft frae Paisley in the afternoon; so ye'll come ower, and tak your tea and a crack wi' him, and I'll send for the leddies, and we'll soon get a' settled."

"It's a soor drogue, mem," replied the Laird; "but the ill and the ail need the dose—I canna

but say, that it's a most extraordinar thing that a man hasna a choice o' his ain in choosin' the wife of his bosom. That weddings are made in Heaven, it's ill to believe, if I'm ordained to be brocht to sic a puir pass as this comes to!—to think that ever I should hae been brocht to marry such a gray gull as Shoosie Minnigaff—it's an iniquity—it's a cryin' sin—it's a sellin' o' me to the Ismaelites—D—l tak baith law and gospel, I'll no marry her yet."

"But consider," cried Mrs Soorocks, "there's Mr Caption——"

"Whare?" cried the Laird, starting and looking round.

"And Mr Angle," resumed the lady, "demanding, as I am told, twenty golden guineas for his curiosity."

"He may thank the government," replied the Laird, "that it's an impossibility to get them. Wasna the guineas put doon and hidden frae the light o' day, and the sight and reach o' man, in the bottomless dungeons o' the Bank o' England, like prisoners doomed to everlasting captivity, a' to let the King raise money by a stamp-act on bank-notes, by the which——"

Here the old man was getting on his hobby, when Mrs Soorocks interfered—

"Hoot toot, Laird, we dinna want to hear o' your standard unit the noo, when we're speakin' o' marriage—so ye'll just come to your tea, and meet your blooming bride. Leave a' the lave o' the trouble to folk that understand thae matters better than yoursell."

CHAPTER XXXII.

At the time appointed, and punctual to the hour, I was at the door of Mrs Soorocks. My friend Leezy admitted me with a pleasant and significant smile. I was desirous of saying something to her on the occasion; but the parlour door being open, I could only smile in return, and walk forward.

On entering the room, I was delighted to see the Laird in full dress, and the two ladies of Barenbraes, all there before me. Miss Shoosie was sitting far aloof, with downcast eyes, and looking interestingly bridal, to the best of her ability. The air of Miss Girzie was more disengaged; and she was seated beside the Laird, seemingly on terms of easy conversation. Mrs Soorocks herself was busy spreading and cutting down the greater part of a large loaf.

As the entertainment was of a pre-nuptial character, it was of course of more than wonted ceremony; and accordingly the tea-table displayed a more than usual show of short-bread, puffs, and seed-cake, to which were added, the delicacies of jellies and marmalades.

A little behind Mrs Soorocks, and not observable on first entering the room, her cousin, Bailie Waft, was seated, refreshing himself after his walk with a glass of whisky and water, sweetened with Muscovado sugar.

"Dear me, Bailie," exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, looking round, after I was seated, "what have I been about?—no to gie you a lime, when I hae got five left o' the half-a-dizzen that was sent to me by the carrier frae our frien' Mrs Puncheons. What dainties thae West India folk in Glasgow enjoy! They weel ken hoo to mak turtle-soup wi' Madeira wine, and no like the lady o' their Port, that boiled a whole turtle-fish wi' barley, and was feared to eat it, thinkin' it wasna wholesome because it didna turn red in the shell like a partan."

So saying, she rose, and opening her cupboard-door, took out a lime from five lying in

a small china-plate, shrivelled on the skin, and as brown as walnuts.

By the by, Mrs Soorocks' cupboard was what, in Renfrewshire, is called a dining-room press, being one of those domestic Museums peculiar to the royal county, and as hers was an example of the kind, it well deserves to be particularly described.

The folding-doors disclosed an arched niche, with pilasters on each side. The shelves were scolloped in the edges, the whole painted of a bright green, and the edges of the shelves and the capitals of the pilasters were gaudily tricked and gilded.

On the bulging centre of the first shelf lay inverted a large punch-bowl, on the bottom of which stood one of lesser dimensions, out of which rose a curious cordial-bottle with two necks. The bowl was flanked with a row of long-shanked wine-glasses, with white spiral ornaments in the stalks, and at the extremity of each wing stood a tall urn-like china-pot with a lid. In the obscurity behind the glasses, you might discover a row of china-plates on

their edges; and above each, on a brass-nail, hung as many custard-glasses by their handles.

On the second floor, the curiosities were somewhat reversed. The shelf receded in the middle, and sweeping forward on both sides, projected over the trays, which below were adorned with the tall spiral-stalked glasses already described; on each of these projections, two middle-sized punch-bowls were inverted, the bottom of each surmounted with a china tea-pot of an antic and fantastical form; in the centre was a vacant place, generally occupied by the silver tea-pot then upon the table: at each side of it usually stood a lofty porcelain tower of tea-cups and saucers—but one of them was at this time demolished, and placed on the tray for the use of the company. A variety of minor bijouterie and wine-glasses filled up the interstices.

The centre of the third shelf again projected, and on it stood a stately crystalline structure, consisting of several stories of syllabub glasses, crowned with a large and lofty shallow goblet, which at the New-year's festival of Mrs Soorocks, when the whole power and splendour of

her cupboard were made effective, was usually occupied with a venerable preserved orange —a gift of some years antiquity from one of her nieces, confected a priori to her own wedding. On each side of this glittering and fragile pile, stood a miscellaneous assemblage of marrowless cups, cracked cream-pots and ale-glasses, flanked by two enormous goblets, with the initials of the late Mr Soorocks engraved thereon. Like many of the other things, they were never used, save on the great annual banquet so often referred to; on which occasion, the one was filled with ale and the other with porter after dinner.

The tea-urn having been brought in, Mrs Soorocks said—

"As ye're the young leddy, Miss Girzie, ye'll mak' the tea;" and so saying, she rose from her chair at the tea-table, and then came and seated herself beside the Laird, while I drew my chair close to the left of Miss Girzie; her sister also moved in echelon upon her right.

Miss Girzie having lifted one of the little silver tea-cannisters, began to take out the orthodox quantity with a spoon, by one spoonful for

the tea-pot, and one for each guest. During this process I heard the intended bride whisperingly say—"Girzie, dinna be wasterfu', shake the spoon, and no heap every ane as if it were a cart o' hay."

Tea being made, the task of handing it round was imposed upon the Laird, he being, as Mrs Soorocks observed, the young man of the company, though this chronologically was not exactly the fact.

During the time the entertainment was being served, our conversation was of a general and ordinary description. Bailie Waft talked political economy, and argued with the Laird against the corn laws; Mrs Soorocks expatiated on the felicity of the married state; while I said agreeable things to Miss Girzie, interspersed with exhilarative allusions in parenthesis to her sister.

So passed the time till tea was finished; and when the equipage was removed by Leezy, and the door shut, Mrs Soorocks thus began the prologue to the matrimonial theme:—

"I have long wished to see such a meeting as the present. Time wears out all things, and

lairds and ladies are like the flowers that bloom, and plants that perish—creatures of a day, and butterflies o' the sunshine. It has often been a wonder to me how year after year should have passed away, and the affection so long nourished in secret atween—I'll no say wha—should never hae come to an issue."

The Laird hemmed sceptically, and Miss Shoosie looked for her pocket-hole, that she might no doubt be ready with her handkerchief.

"But," continued Mrs Soorocks, "whatever is ordained will sooner or later come to pass; and seldom hae I ever had in my life a pleasanter reflection, than in seeing here twa young persons made for one another."

The Laird looked with the tail of his eye towards Miss Shoosie, and seemed as if he smelt senna, or mandragora; while she drew her hand over her face bashfully, as if to conceal the depth of her emotions.

The Bailie interposed—

"There's nae need, cousin, to mak thrown-up warp o' the web we hae in han'; the young couple understand one another; and if the yarn has been raveled for a time, it's weel redd noo.

The only thing that I would object to is the delay, and for twa sound and substantial reasons—first, it's an auld byword and a true, that delays are dangerous; and under the second head, I would speak o' economy, and anent the expense o' what extravagant wasterfu' women ca' bridal braws."

"In that," said I, interrupting him, "I agree with you, Mr Waft; on this occasion, such expenditure is quite unnecessary."

"But," rejoined Miss Girzie, "wouldna my sister, Mrs Soorocks, don't you think, require a riding-habit for the wedding-jaunt?"

"It's verra true," was the answer, "that mony a young leddy that ne'er was on a horse's back, nor expects to be, gets a riding-habit at her marriage, the which is put to nae ither use after, than to be made up into claes for some o' the bairns; and in that respect, there might be something to be said for your sister getting ane; but all things considered——"

Here the Laird groaned from the depths of his spirit, and the Bailie quietly interposed—

"But if there is no marriage-jaunt, and I see no need of such a thing, where is the need to

mak an outlay for a riding-habit at all?—'Deed, my friends, if you'll be ruled by me, you'll mak up for your lost time, and declare a marriage at once, without farther summering or wintering about the matter."

"Oh," cried Miss Girzie, lifting her hands, and spreading her fingers, "is't a possibility!"

Miss Shoosie heaved a sigh. The Laird rose from his seat, and walking with his hands behind his back to the window, raised another in responsive echo; while Mrs Soorocks, before commencing operations, gave me a sly nod, as much as to intimate her ability and readiness to carry on the attack.

"Laird," said she, "I'm no ane that is for hurrying on a solemn business in a rash manner. Before we come to speak of the wedding seriously—tho' we're only joking yet——"

The Laird interrupted her tartly, and looking round with a particularly sinister expression of countenance, concluded the sentence by adding —"And I houp ye'll be lang sae."

"Weel, weel, Laird," replied the lady, "ye know it's all your ain doing; tak your wull o't; it depends entirely on yoursell."

"On me?" cried the Laird—"My gracious! whae ever heard the equal o' that?"—Then he muttered in an under tone, "If ever there was a lee, that's ane."

"Lee!" said Mrs Soorocks, catching the Laird's *aside*—"Every joke's a lee o' its kind. —But come, help yoursell to a glass o' my old wine; for ye seem to be in an unco low key, Laird. Ye see the Bailie requires neither precept nor example wi' his tumbler, when the mercy's afore him."

For some time after this, there was a visible embarrassment in the manner of all present. Mrs Soorocks, however, was the ruling spirit of the hour, and she presided with undismayed equanimity.

After taking off his first glass, the Laird was persuaded by his active hostess to a second, and to a third; but still matters looked, to use her own expression, "unco dowie." She then tried him on a new tack.

"Ye believe, Laird," she said, "that whatever is destined to come in at ane's door 'ill no gang bye them?"

"Doubtless," answered the Laird, "there is nae arguing against that."

"Weel, if ye come that length, I maun just tell ye my mind, that for mony and mony a lang year it has aye struck me, somehow or ither, that Providence, Laird, destined Miss Shoosie there and you for ane anither. I'm persuaded you're mair than half o' that opinion yoursell?"

"Doubtless, strange wheemsies will enter intil leddies' heads," replied the Laird, turning his face half away from the speaker, like one half unwilling to listen to unwelcome intelligence—"It's neither your duty nor mine to dive sae deep into the hidden secrets o' nature."

"Na, but, Laird, just hear me a moment," said Mrs Soorocks, lifting up nuts from a china-plate on the side-table—"seeing is believing all the world over. Now, ye see, if I was to take a pair of these nuts, and say to mysell, there's me and there's Mr Rupy, as I throwed them into the fire, ye wad see the ane fizz, and flee away frae the ither up the lum, or out at the ribs, like a bomb-shell; for, ye observe, it's no in the course o' nature that the like o' him and

me should ever come thegither; but on the contrair—sae deeply am I impressed wi' the truth o' what I am saying—that I could wager my life maistly, that were I to put in these twa, and say, as I do noo, 'there goes you, Laird, and there goes Miss Shoosie,'—(all the time Mrs Soorocks was suiting the action to the word,)—ye wad observe them burn to a white aizle lovingly together."

The two nuts, according to Mrs Soorocks' prediction, burned together lovingly.

"It's gay curious, I allow," said the Laird; "but dinna expect to throw cantrips in my een wi' ony o' your glaumrie. Whether I take or rejec, it maun be a free-will gift."

"Maist certainly," was the reply of Bailie Waft; "and from what I've seen and heard aboot ye, Laird, I aye jealoused where your guid taste wad land ye."

Mrs Soorocks, though sorely put to her mettle by the Laird's obduracy, yet was determined not to leave the well-foughten field without gaining her point; so, with Mr Mailings's consent, she mixed for him a tumbler of punch, "the rum of which," as she told him, "having

been procured from Coruel Archy of Greenock, was of a suavity as mild as its vender."

The general jocularity was meanwhile on the increase, Mrs Soorocks from time to time urging the gentlemen to use their freedoms with her bottles, and do a little for the good of the house; and, though tardy to relax, the Laird's features at length brightened up with congenial sympathy. The Bailie became garrulous, and hinted away from time to time to Miss Shoosie on the pleasures of housekeeping. Miss Girzie argued briskly with Mrs Soorocks for and against the propriety of irregular and clandestine marriages, but with a tone of concession gradually softening into conciliation; while the Laird, continuing to wax still more cheerful and bold, boasted of his youthful sprees, and, as he snapped his thumbs, sang aloud a verse of the old ballad,—

"The carle he came ower the craft
Wi' his beard new shaven."

"Na," cried Mrs Soorocks, "if it's come to that wi' ye, Laird, it's time we should bring ye afore a magistrate, and hae your vows honour-

ably ratified.—Bailie Waft, I tell ye to put him to the question."

Here the Bailie rose, and endeavouring to wipe the flush from his brow with his handkerchief, looked as grave as the occasion would let him, and said, "Mr Mailings, is this lady,"—pointing to Miss Shoosie,—"your wife?"

"Ony lady's my wife," said the Laird, "that will condescend to tak me."

The Bailie then turned to Miss Shoosie,—"Do you, madam, acknowledge this gentleman for your husband?"

"Confess, confess," cried Mrs Soorocks, "and dinna spoil our ploy."

Miss Shoosie simpered, and said, "Sister, I canna refuse ony langer."

Here there was a general clapping of hands, and the health of Mr and Mrs Mailings was drank in bumpers by all but themselves. The bride acknowledged the courtesy with solemn propriety, and the Laird answered with a loud laugh; but there was a ring in its sound wild and sardonic. Another tumbler, however, soon restored the hilarity; and in a few minutes after,

supper, which Mrs Soorocks had prospectively prepared for the occasion, was announced.

The fete passed over with all due humour and conviviality. The Laird warmed more and more towards his bride, and said many sweet things across the table, as much to the amazement as the amusement of the company. Bailie Waft waxed eloquent in Glasgow stories, and forgot himself at length so far as to lose the solemnity of his official situation in jocose song-singing.

At a late, or rather an early hour, the happy party arose from table, and under a moon

"Ploughing the azure depths, and looking down
With sanctified benignity on man,"

sallied forth for The Place, the bride hanging tenderly on the bridegroom's arm.

After taking off a glass of the Laird's canary, to the future felicities of the enamoured couple, we at length wished them a good night. The Bailie and myself, talking of matrimonial comforts, conveyed Miss Girzie weeping to her now solitary home.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Early next morning I went over to Mrs Soorocks, to assist her in the reveilie of the young couple; but on approaching the door, she chanced to observe me from the parlour window, and let me in herself.

"O," said she, in a voice of serious alarm, "what have I no got to tell you!"

I was thunderstruck at the earnestness of her exclamation, and cried,—

"My gracious! has the bridegroom run away?"

"Waur than that, waur than that; meikle hae ye to answer for.—Nawaubpore yestreen, when we were at our daffin',—blind mortals we are, and little ken the perils o' our situation—Nawaubpore, as I was saying, sent ower his London newspaper to read; but I was so taen up, that I neglecket it till this morning, and what do you think was the first thing that met

my consternated eye—the marriage o' Dr Lounlans, and to whom?—guess."

"I hope your suspicions have not been verified?"

"Verified! they have been dumbfounder'd. He's married, and married to Miss Clawrissy Chandos, the great heiress, and failing her mother, the rightfu' leddy o' Barenbraes.—Now, think o' that and weep."

"This is indeed extraordinary news!"

"It's a thunderclap," said Mrs Soorocks. "It's an earthquake—I think I fin' the world shooglin beneath my verra feet. We thocht the Nabob wad be an oppressor, but what has the puir Laird to expect frae the hauns o' Dr Lounlans, on his mother's account! Na—I canna think at a' about Mrs Mailings. Na, it was never ordained that she shou'd hae been married!—O, sir, what have ye no to answer for!"

"Upon my word, Mrs Soorocks," replied I gravely, "it has been all your own work; I have been but an innocent spectator. I took no particular part in the business. You first suggested it to me; I remember very well the

time and the place. It was in the avenue of Auldbiggings. Me, Mrs Soorocks! no one can impute any blame to me."

"Weel! after that," cried the lady," I'll be surprised at nothing that man may say. But, hoosever, I shake myself free o' them, and let you and them settle it as ye may; for I hae lang promised Mrs Puncheons a visit, and I'll be aff to Blythswood Place this blessed day. I declare I dinna ken whether I'm standin' on my head or my heels; surely it's all a dream, and a vision o' the night-season: Shoosie Minnigaff married! the thing's no possible, tho' it has taen place afore my ain een."

"But, my dear ma'am, let us be calm—let us consider what is the next best to be done."

"Consider yoursell; what have I to consider?" exclaimed the lady; "I wash my hands—I have had nothing to do with it from the beginning to the end. They'll be a cess upon us baith—they'll be on the parish—Oh, oh, oh!"

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and Mrs Soorocks giving a hasty glance out, cried—

"Wharo shall I hide mysell?—here's puir misfortunate Girzie."

And she immediately began to compose herself, so that by the time that dejected maiden was admitted, she had mustered fortitude enough to break the doleful tidings to her thus with gravity, composure, and decorum.

"Have you had any letters by the post, Miss Girzie, for I have gotten the newspapers?"

"No," said Miss Girzie, "not *this* morning;" dwelling, as I thought, rather emphatically on *this*, which excited my attention.

"Your sister is a lucky woman," rejoined Mrs Soorocks,—"a most lucky woman indeed—she has just been married in the verra nick o' time."

"I hope she'll be happy," replied Miss Girzie, composedly.

"But do ye ken what has happen'd? Dr Lounlans is married."

"We expected that some time ago, you ken."

"But wha has he married?" cried Mrs Soorocks. "No less than—your niece and deadly enemy, Miss Clawrissy."

"So we have been informed."

"Informed!" exclaimed Mrs Soorocks; "and whan were ye informed?"

"Yesterday morning by the post, in a most kind letter from Dr Lounlans himself."

"And did you know of that last night?—Girzie Minnigaff, you and your sister have long been known as twa sordid wretches; but such deception, ye deceevers, to practise on a worthy gentleman! I think it's reason enough for a divorce; at ony rate, it canna fail to bring a judgment upon you.—And what's to become o' you, Miss Girzie?"

"It was agreed between my sister and me, that I shou'd live with her."

"What did ye say, Girzie Minnigaff?"

"It was agreed between me and my sister, that I shou'd bide wi' her at Auldbiggings."

"It's a confess'd plot," cried Mrs Soorocks, turning to me; adding, "So, sir, a bonny haun ye hae made o't; the Laird's to be burthen'd wi' the twa; but bide a wee till I get my hat and shawl, and I'll gang ower wi' ye, were it for nae mair than to bid the misfortunate couple fareweel, before I leave hame."

In a little time we had rung the Laird's door-bell, and Jenny ushered us into the parlour, till she had informed her master of our arrival. I was afraid from the bickering which was recommencing between my two female wards, that some mortal rupture was threatening to take place. But at this critical juncture the young couple came into the room, seemingly on much better terms with one another than I had ventured to expect. The lady had herself informed him of the event, at which, instead of expressing any feeling of apprehension for the consequences, he was only confirmed in stronger feelings of dislike against the reverend doctor, vituperating the whole body of the clergy, and considering the ambition of his adversary as dictated by insolence, to mortify himself.

Mrs Soorocks, who had neither anticipated the felicity of the new pair, nor the complacency with which the Laird appeared to regard his lot, said, "But, Mr Mailings, tak thocht, remember ye're a ruin'd man; ye hadna left yoursell the means to maintean you alone, how do ye think that ye can maintean other two?"

"I have made my calculation," said he; "I'm

going into Edinburgh. I'll publish my book in numbers, and mak a monthly income by that. Miss Girzie's to bide wi' us, for, as my dawty here says, (chucking Mrs Mailings under the chin,) the house that can haud twa, can haud three; the fire that can warm four feet, can warm six; the same pot that boils for two, can boil for three, so that, you see, no to be entering into particulars, Miss Girzie can leeve wi' us at no expense, and she'll be company to her sister, when I'm in my study concern'd wi' my work."

Mrs Soorocks clapt her hands together, and turning up her eyes, said, with an ejaculatory accent, "Who cou'd have thocht o' this!"

Breakfast was then announced, and which, considering the calibre of the respective parties, passed off with so much propriety, that my conscience began to be a little appeased. It really appeared to me that the part which I had taken in the business, (for I no longer now affected to deny, even to myself, that I had been instrumental to the completion of the marriage,) was rather commendable; so much are we prone to judge of the rectitude and proprie-

ty of even our own actions by their results; and the same sentiment seemed to strike Mrs Soorocks, for when we were returning from Auldbiggings after breakfast, she whispered to me—

"Weel, sir, I think we haena made sae verra bad a job o't after a', only what's to become o' them?—we maun try what can be done by working on the tender mercies o' Dr Lounlans; and I hope Mrs Lounlans will be found to hae bowels o' compassion; and if she has, I'm sure she'll be the first o' her kin, by the mother's side o' the house, that ever had ony. Cou'd ye hae ever imagined that the twa deceitfu' creatures would hae had the sense to do as they did yestreen? I'll ne'er put trust in the countenance o' womankind again."

Much more of the same sort on both sides passed between us till we separated, having previously arranged that we should watch the return of the Doctor, and endeavour to complete our good work, by soliciting him to allow the three Graces, as Mrs Soorocks called the Laird, the bride, and bride's sister, to enjoy the remainder of their days at Barenbraes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

On returning to my own house, I was somewhat surprised to find, that during my short absence, Mr Loopy, of the respectable house of Loopy and Hypothec, writers in Glasgow, had been calling, urgent to see me; and had mentioned to my housekeeper, he had several places in the neighbourhood to visit—among others Auldbiggings.

As there had been for some time a rumour through the country of an expected dissolution of Parliament, I was at no loss to guess, from the connexions of my old friend Loopy, the probable motive of his civility in calling upon me, with whom he had no particular ostensible business; but I could not account for the circumstance of his intended visit to the Laird,

who in his political predilections had ever been opposed to those of the present ministry.

Having given up the day to idleness, it occurred to me, that perhaps I might be able to intercept the worthy man of business, either on his way to or from The Place, and induce him to take a quiet dinner with me, for I have ever found his shrewd conversation particularly racy and relishing. Accordingly, after giving orders for the leg of my last-killed five-year-old to be dressed, I sauntered along the high way towards Auldbiggings; seeing nothing of the lawyer till I was at the bottom of the avenue, where his post-chaise was waiting—the approach to the house being in such a state with ruts and stones, that the postilion did not venture to take his carriage and horses to the door.

I went up to the house; but long before I reached the entrance, everything indicated that there was indeed a change of administration within.

Jenny Clatterpans, bare-footed and bare-legged, with her petticoats kilted, and her hair falling in masses from under her cap, was standing on a stool whitewashing the lintels of

the lower windows with an old hearth-brush; her whitening-pot was a handless and cripple tureen. The cook, ghastly and piebald with soot and whitening, was rattling with the remnant of an old blanket in her hand, in the midst of a numerous assemblage of all manner of kitchen utensils, brazen sconces, pewter trenchers, that might for magnitude have been shields to Ajax, copper lids of departed fish-kettles, a warming-pan, damasked with holes in the lid, and the handle of which had been lost beyond the memory of man, a brass basting ladle, a superannuated tormentor, a bright copper tea-kettle, the spout of which had long become loose by many scourings, but still it was the pride and glory of the shelf on which it was wont to stand, flanking a long array of various sorts of brass candlesticks which were lying on the grass around it. Beyond her, at a picturesque distance, lay a mound of feather-beds, pillows, and bolsters, which Jock, without his coat, was manfully thrashing with a flail, raising such a dust that he could only be seen at intervals like a demon in the clouds of a whirlwind.

As it was impossible to think of interrupting so many indications of a radical reform, I walked into the house, intending to go up to the old gentleman's study, but the lobby was so crowded with old casks, tubs, and firkins, empty bottles and boxes, that I with great difficulty made my way to the foot of the stair, on which the bride and her sister were endeavouring to bring down a large worsted wheel, which, from the death of the first Mrs Mailings, had been removed from the kitchen, and placed upon the great napery ark that stood at the stairhead, being the first stage on its way to the lumber garret.

Having assisted the ladies to bring this woollen mill round the turn of the stair, I at last reached the room where the Laird and the Lawyer were seated, engaged so earnestly in conversation, that neither of them hardly observed me enter. Their topic was the impending general election, and it soon appeared that Mr Loopy was not canvassing for the vote, but for the purchase of the superiority of Auldbiggings.

"Three hundred pounds," Mr Loopy was saying as I came in, "and of money down too,

no trouble but to count it—it is a very large sum for my client to give."

"But your client, Mr Loopy, is a capitalist, and kens hoo to mak his outlay productive," rejoined the Laird; "when he bad you offer me three hundred pounds, he was thinking o' my agricultural distress; but this is no sic a rainy day as to cause me to sell my hen below her marketable value. It's but the second, ye maun ken, o' my honey moon, and when will a man be croose if he's no then? and isna my wife yin o' the heirs-portioners, as ye wad ca't, in law, o' the estate o' Barenbraes? But noo when I think o't, Mr Loopy, I'll no sell at a', for it may be a mean hereafter to help me to get a post in the government, or a cadetcy to Indy for one of our younger sons—Three hunder poun', Mr Loopy! I wadna tak three thousan': the superiority is 120 pun' scots, auld valuation, and it wadna be kittle to mak a piecing, as ye weel ken hoo, that wad gie ye the poore and capacity o' twa votes instead o' ane."

"But, Laird, how could I be aware of that circumstance?" replied Mr Loopy; "however, that it does make a difference, I admit, yet

you should consider that votes are falling in value; for *you* know," and the lawyer appealed to me in verification of the fact, "that the great landholders in this county are splitting their superiorities to the utmost extremity, and actually giving them away for nothing; they are a drug in the market, that is to say in a manner."

I now began to see the drift of Mr Loopy's visit to the Laird, and with the more satisfaction, as it never had occurred to any of the helpless man's friends, to think of the value of his vote for the county, as a means to lighten, if not to avert, the misfortune with which he was immediately threatened; nor probably had it ever before occurred to himself, for such was the improvidence and slackness in all his affairs, that nothing was ever done in them until it became absolutely necessary or inevitable.

The Laird was touched on his weak side by reference to the multiplication of votes tending to reduce their value, and being evidently at a loss for an answer, I thought it my duty to interpose, saying, "That the making of so many new votes, was only a proof that the ensuing contest was expected to be a hot one, and that

those who kept aloof from either party, till the proper time, could not fail to realize the full value of their influence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr Loopy, "it would be most abominable, and what no honest man like Mr Mailings could think of doing, to sell himself to the highest bidder—and besides, the general election is not expected before the fall, and a vote made at this time, will, in that case, be of no use, for the infeftment must run year and day. But, Laird, to mak short work o't, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, I think I could almost promise—for my client is a liberal as well as a wealthy man—I could almost promise that he might be brought to go the length of five hundred pounds."

"I can say nae mair about it," replied the old man, "without consulting my amiable spouse, Mrs Mailings;" and he vociferated, "Dawty, come ben the house, dawty, and help me to mak a bargain wi' Mr Loopy."

The lady, however, did not immediately answer to the summons; her labours had dishevelled her dress, and discomposed her temperature; but when she had somewhat arranged the

former, and cooled herself with a towel or handkerchief, after being again called, she came into the room, followed by Miss Girzie, whose complexion was equally heightened by her share in the toil, and her dress even still more disarranged.

The Laird briefly stated, that Mr Loopy had come to buy, if he would sell, the superiority of Auldbiggings, and had offered five hundred pounds.

"If he would speak about fifteen, it would be mair wiselike," said the leddy, looking askance at the lawyer, who pushed his chair back, and regarded her with the utmost astonishment of features, gradually relaxing into a smile expressive of incredulous wonder.

"Mr Mailings," he exclaimed, "oh, ye are a happy man to have such a wife; and when you come to have your children round your table like olive plants, she will indeed be a fruitful vine!"

"Dawty," said the Laird, quite delighted to hear such commendations bestowed on the lady of his love,—"Dawty, let us be reasonable, and not rigorous."

"Be just before you're generous," said his spouse.

"Think o' wha's to come after you," rejoined Miss Girzie.

"Consider your small family," cried I, "and your young son, that you intend to send to India."

"'Mony a laird's daughter has been waur tochered than wi' her father's vote at a contested election, Mr Loopy," interposed the Laird firmly; "your client may tak his five hunder pound and mak a playock wi' a whistle in its tail, or he'll either get heft or blade o' my vote for sic a trifle. Five hundred pound! talk o' a thoosan', and I'll maybe hearken wi' the hearing side o' my head."

"A thousand," exclaimed Mr Loopy, start ing up and affecting to move towards the door, "I never heard anything so unreasonable."

"Weel, weel," cried the Laird, "will ye split the——"

"Hold your tongue, Auldbiggings," exclaimed Mrs Mailings, "and dinna mak yoursell a prodigal son; an ye wad part wi' your patrimony in that gate, ye wad weel deserve to eat

draff wi' the swine; na, na, a thousand pound is ower little!"

"I wonder," said Mr Loopy, still standing on the floor, "I wonder, Mrs Mailings, that ye wadna say guineas, when ye think there's such fools in the world as wad gie a thousand pound, and for what?——"

"For a vote," said Miss Girzie, sedately, "and ye ken the full value o't, Mr Loopy."

The leddy shook her head significantly. "I thank you for your gentle hint, Mr Loopy," cried she; "and we'll no take ae farthing less than a thousan' guineas."

The lawyer turned round, with a well-affected huff, and at that moment Mrs Soorocks made her appearance, puffing and blowing, crying out,—

"I hope I'm in time,—I hope ye hae na concluded the bargain,—I hope, Mrs Mailings, ye'll protect your gudeman,—Mr Loopy, Mr Loopy, hoo could ye think after wheedling, as I hae heard this morning, auld Peter Kethcart out o' his bit laun, for little mair than the half o' its value, to say naething o' the superiority, to come fleeching here to beguile Auldbiggings; know-

ing, as ye do, Mr Loopy, that it's a the residue left o' his patrimony,—but, leddies, when I heard he was here, I came running like a maukin, to snatch you as brands out o' the burning; for he has a tongue that wad wile the bird aff the tree!"

"I'm no safe here," rejoined Mr Loopy, with a smile, and turning to the Laird, he added, "As I was instructed by my client to go a certain length, if you are willing to treat with me I shall be liberal; you shall have a thousand pounds for the superiority down, if you choose to take it; and further I am not empowered to go."

The Laird was evidently on the point of accepting the offer, when Mrs Soorocks exclaimed,—

"The superiority o' Auldbiggings sell't for a thousand pounds, that is sae weel worth double the money! Oh, Miss Shoosie, Mrs Mailings, as I should ca' ye, tak that man o' yours into your bed-room, and gie him admonition,—it's no for a sma' profit that my friend Mr Loopy's scamperin' frae Dan to Beersheba.——"

"I certainly think," rejoined I, "that Mr

Mailings ought to have some time to consider of the marketable value of his only remaining property."

Here Mrs Mailings cried,—

"It would be cheatry to bargain away a right and property that Mr Loopy's sae ready to gie a thousan' and fifty pounds for—na, a thousan' guineas!"

With that she turned round to the lawyer, and said, with a mim mouth, and a dulcet accent,—

"If ye'll call the morn, Mr Loopy, maybe ye'll hae an answer."

"Deed," rejoined the Laird, "it's my solid opinion, that if the qualification o' Auldbiggings be worth a thousan' guineas at this time, it ought, wi' discreet management, to be soon worth a great deal more; because you see all trade is in a state o' panic and calamity, and folk will have nae other way o' making their bread, than by gettin' posts in the government; so that if a vote noo be worth sae mickle, what will it no be worth when mair customers for posts come to deal in the market; for you know, Mr Loopy, that there's a standard o' value by which

the price of everything may be measured, and all we want to know is, what this natural standard is?"

"I doot, Mr Mailings," replied the lawyer, "that, like the other political economists, ye run some risk o' mistaking the elwand for the cloth; but I observe you are not in a humour to deal with me to-day, so I will take Mrs Mailings's hint."

Accordingly, he left the room, and I followed, to beg his company at dinner, which, however, he declined at first; but seeing the confusion in which the house of Auldbiggings was, he said at the time, "Perhaps the Laird might be induced to join me;" and he would look in upon us in the afternoon, on his return to Glasgow.

CHAPTER XXXV.

On returning into the room, I found the Laird alone. The ladies had retired to an inner apartment, to determine, as he informed me, in what manner he should deal with Mr Loopy.

"Isna my wife," said he, "a clever wife? Weel does she ken how many blue beans it taks to mak five. Had I married her twenty years ago, I wouldna hae needed this day to stand in awe o' lawyers and naubobs, and sic like o' the clanjamphry—and she's sic a pleasant young creature that she blithens my verra blood; I couldna hae thought it possible for matrimony to mak a man sae happy. It's true, I had an experience before; but then my first was a forced marriage, whereas this, my second, has been a free-will offering—a' o' my ain instigation, the which maks an unco difference. I didna think,

when I tell't you in the garden that I would fain marry Miss Shoosie Minnigaff, that I had sic a sincerity o' sound affection for her, as a' my friends had sae lang discovered; but you know, it is written in the word, that we do not know ourselves; and behold, I am a living illustration of the text.—However, anent the thoosan' pounds for the superiority, what's your opinion?"

I told him that I considered it a great godsend; but remarked, that, as it was not sufficient to procure for him any effectual relief from his mortgages, it would be much better to give up the estate at once to the Nabob, and buy an annuity with the money on the joint lives of himself and Mrs Mailings.

"Had we no a prospect of a family, what ye counsel would be worth hearkening to."

"I doubt, Laird, that's but a barren prospect; and, besides, you ought to consider the great wickedness of augmenting our national distress, by increasing the population of the country, already so redundant. I beseech you, Mr Mailings, to respect the admonitions of economical philosophy."

"Hoots, hoots—dinna talk sic Malthusian havers to me. The cause o' our national decay, and agricultural distress, broken merchants, ravelled manufacturers, and brittle bankers, come a'thegither frae another well-ee. Were sic calamities ever heard o' in this reawlm before the turnip farming came into vogue? Answer me that. Weel do I mind that it was in the ha'rst o' that verra year, when the first peck o' turnips was sawn in the shire, that the sough came through the kintra o' the Ayr bank gaun to pigs and whistles. My auntie, wha was then in the lan' o' the livin', and has since been sleeping in Abraham's bosom, wi' the rest o' the patriarchs, said, on that melancholious occasion—and she was a judicious woman—that to gar sheep and kye crunch turnips, was contrary to nature, their teeth being made for grass and kail-blades; and that it would be seen, that the making o' turnip-pastures would prove a sign o' something. Never did I forgether words o' warning, though I was then but a bairn, a very babe and suckling, in a sense; and I hae noted, year by year, that her prophecy has been mair and mair coming to pass; for, with the in-

growth o' turnip-farming, there has aye been a corresponding smasherie amang the looms and sugar-hoggits. Last year, I was in a terror for what was to happen, when I saw sae mony braw parks that used to be ploughed for vittle to man, sawn for fodder to beasts."

"Your story, Laird," said I, "well deserves the attention of his Majesty's Ministers; for some of them, in my opinion, have been finding similar effects, as legitimately descended from causes equally proximate. But if turnip-fields were sown with corn, would the distress be abated?"

"How can ye misdoot it?—and the redundant population would be abated too,—for, as they baith came in wi' the turnips, wouldna they gang out wi' them?—Isna that a truth o' political economy?"

At this crisis the ladies returned into the room, and the Laird addressing himself to his wife, said,—

"Weel, dawty, hoo hae ye settled the government anent the price o' the superiority?"

"We hae disposed o' it a' to the best advantage," interposed Mrs Soorocks; "and ye need-

na trouble your head about it—We'll get Mr Loopy to lay out the money—for he's a clever man in his line—on a life-rent for you and Mrs Mailings; and ye'll gang intil Enbro', and live comfortable, like twa patriarchs. There, Laird, ye may spend the evening o' your days in lown felicity; and hammergaw frae morning to night wi' the advocates about corn laws and circulating middims; and my frien' Bailie Blackwood, he has a great respec for me—he'll, on my account, let you write in the Magazine for your amusement."

"Devil's in that woman," muttered the Laird aside—"She's a torment to me, and to every other body.—But, dawty," he subjoined aloud to his lady, "I hae a plan far better than the veesions o' life-rents that Mrs Soorocks would be-glammar us a' wi'—this godsend o' the thousan' pounds——"

"Thousan' pounds!" exclaimed all the ladies with one voice—"Ye'll surely never tak a farding less than the twa thousan'?"

"For which," continued Mrs Mailings sola, "Mrs Soorocks tells me we may get mair than two hunner and fifty pounds a-year, paid down

in bank-notes, without ony stress o' law, and wouldna that be a grand thing?"

"But if the banks break," cried the Laird.

"If the lift fa's, it'll smoor the laverocks," retorted Mrs Soorocks; at which the Laird bounced from his seat, and giving a stamp with his foot, exclaimed,—

"I'll be master in my own house—I'll be ruled by naebody—I'll hae a will o' my own; and I will—The devil's in't, if a man o' my substance is to be snuled in this gait."

He then turned round to his wife, and said, in a softened accent,—

"Dinna be frightened, dawty—I'm no in a pashon wi' you, but ye'll let me hae my ain way."

"And what's that way?" inquired dawty, in a tone which did not indicate an entire acquiescence in the doctrine of passive obedience.

"I've had a notion," said the Laird, addressing himself to me, "that there's a mine o' copper ore aneath the whinny-knowes; and don't you think it would be very advisable for me to work it, and pay off the wadsets wi' the profits?"

I participated in the alarm and consternation

of the ladies at the propounding of such a scheme. Miss Girzie clasped her hands in agony, and sat in a supplicating posture. Her sister stood erect, many inches taller than her wont, with her arms extended, and her fingers spread out like the leaves of the palmetto; while Mrs Soorocks burst into an immoderate fit of laughing, exclaiming, "Did ye ever hear sic a goose wi' a golden egg?—a copper mine!—I wonder, when ye were at it, that ye didna dream o' a Potosi."

"Weel, weel," said the Laird, nettled at the effect he had produced, "mak a kirk and a mill o't; but my plans will get justice some day."

At this juncture, a rattling voice on the stair drew off our attention from the matter in debate; and Jock, with his flail over his shoulder, and covered with feathers, as if he had been in a snow-storm, rushed into the room, crying,—

"Odsake, odsake, here's ane o' the Minister's lasses, wi' news that'll freeze your verra marrow. The minister's come hame wi' his bridal-wife; and they're awa in a cotch o' their ain—set a Minister up wi' his ain cotch—to had the infare at Barenbraes—Leddies—leddies—oh, my leddy madam mistress, he'll tak possession o' the

house and heritage—and what's far waur, here's likewise the Nawbob in a' his glory, comin' nae doot to drive you and the Laird, like Adam and Eve, out o' this pleasant paradise and garden o' Eden, that it might be, for the sma' cost o' a little reparation."

Mrs Soorocks was the first who broke silence after this portentous announcement. Addressing herself to the ladies, she said,—

"Weel, cousins, havena ye found at last the true prophecy o' my words?"

"Cousins!" said I to Mrs Soorocks; "you told me they were only distant connexions?"

"But near aneugh," replied she actively, "to hae been a cess upon me, had I no got them otherwise provided for; and I thank you, sir, for the helping-hand ye hae been to me in the work."

I felt much inclined to exclaim with the Laird, "Devil's in that woman, she's a torment to me and to every other body;" but the sound of the Nabob's voice, as he forced his way up through the chaos of chattels, with which the staircase was encumbered, arrested the imprecation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Nabob came in with well-acted jocularity, and, totally regardless of his sulky reception, began to rally the Laird on his spirit in choosing so young and so blooming a bride. Nor was he less lavish of his compliments on the lady. On Mrs Soorocks, to whom he justly ascribed the entire merit of having designed and accomplished the match, his commendations were without end; nevertheless, in all this bustle of boisterous gesticulation, it was soon evident, that he had come for some other purpose than to felicitate the happy pair.

After the first rush and froth of his merriment had subsided, or run to waste, he began with his characteristic straight-forwardness, seemingly unconscious of the abruptness of the transac-

tion, to state, he had been informed that Mr Loopy was buying up the superiorities of sundry small parcels of land, with the design, as it was conjectured, of uniting them together, so as to enable him to dispose of qualifications for the county election. "And I hear, Mr Mailings," said he, "that the snaky rascal has been with you. Have you sold yours?—if you have, recollect the purchase-money is mine."

"We'll hae twa words about that," replied the Laird dryly.

"Is not my security over all the estate?"

"Deed is't; it's o'er the whole tot o' the lan'—but I may say, in the words of a reform in Parliament—'the whole land, and nothing but the land.'"

"If that be the case," cried the Nabob, piqued, "and that the superiority may be sold by itself, I think you ought to have given me the first offer.—A man has but the half of his estate, when he has not all the rights belonging to it."

"And for what should we hae gi'en you the

first offer?" exclaimed Jock with indignation, as he still stood in the middle of the room, feathered, cap-a-pie, and with his flail shouldered.

The Nabob looked with a tygerlike scowl; and going sedately towards him, seized him calmly by the collar, and walking him to the door, pushed him headlong out, tartly applying his foot, at the same moment, to the seat of Jock's honour. But Jock was not to be so touched with impunity. In the instant of his expulsion, he ran after Mr Loopy, and watching him just as he was stepping into the chaise, which was waiting at the avenue gate, he worked upon him to return.

"I take you a' to witness, leddies and gentlemen," cried Jock, as he returned with his man of business; "I take every ane o' you to witness anent my bottomrie. There's the panel that did the deed, Mr Loopy—deal with him, as he has written on the brod at the corner o' his planting—'according to the utmost rigour of law.' I'll be even wi' you noo, Nawaubpore, for a' the dule and sorrow that you and cleipy

Caption would sigh and wallywae about, for the bit clink I gi'ed wi' a harmless fishingrod to John Angle's brazen whirligig."

Whether Jock had informed Mr Loopy of the immediate cause of quarrel, as he brought him back to the house, did not appear by anything in the manner of the lawyer; but after some altercation, partly in good-humour, and partly sparringly, the assault which poor Jock had suffered was forgotten, and the man of business, with an equivocal deviation from the fact, reminded the Laird that he promised to sell the superiority to him; warning him to beware of dealing with any other.

"Hooly, hooly," cried the Laird; "ye ken, Mr Loopy, that if, for ceeveelity, I maunna, in my ain house, ca' that a lee, it would be the next thing till't, to say it wasna like ane. But since we hae gotten twa candidates on the leet, I'll play even-down justice wi' you baith—A thoosan' pounds sterling for the superiority o' Auldbiggings—wha bids mair?"

"Eleven hundred," cried Mrs Soorocks.

Mr Loopy looked at her, and raising his out-

spread hands in mirthful amazement, said, with more sincerity, however, than he intended should be discovered, "And what would Mrs Soorocks do with a superiority?"

"Sell't to you for an advantage," replied the lady with a significant nod, and a smile to me.

"Eleven hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings," resumed the Laird —"wha bids mair?"

"Twelve hundred," said the Nabob with a perplexed and embarrassed look, as if he was not quite aware of the consequences of the bidding.

"Mr Rupees, are ye really in earnest?" said the lawyer, with a slight inflexion of the voice, almost in the key of alarm.

"I'll bid thirteen hundred," said Miss Girzie, with a giggle; "for I hae heard o' a vote sell't for more than seventeen hundred pounds."

"Thirteen hundred pounds for the superiority of Auldbiggings—going for thirteen hundred pounds"—resumed the Laird, drawing his chair towards the table, and striking it with his snuff-box for a hammer.

"Nay, if ye're making a diversion o't," said the lawyer, "I may as well give a bode too—so I say fourteen hundred, Mr Mailings—but mind I have no intention of standing to the bargain."

"The devil!" exclaimed the Nabob; "then I say fifteen hundred, Mr Mailings, and I intend to stand by the offer."

"Do as you like, Nawaubpore," interposed Mrs Soorocks; "but, Laird, if ye get a better, ye're free to take it; so I say saxteen hundred, Mr Mailings, and I intend to stand to the offer."

Mr Loopy was every moment plainly becoming more and more excited; he endeavoured to appear calm and to smile, but his eyes were eager and restless, and his nether lip quivered. "This," said he, "is the most extraordinary proceeding I ever witnessed. Surely, Mrs Soorocks, you can have no intention of buying; and, Mr Rupees, you could never think of giving any such money?"

"Sixteen hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings! once"—shouted the Laird, chuckling with delight.

"I beg, Mr Mailings," cried the lawyer, "that you would allow me to say one word."

"Sixteen hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings—mind, Mr Loopy, it's pounds sterling,"—was, however, all the answer he got.

"Seventeen hundred, and be damned to it!" roared the Nabob.

"Remember, Mr Mailings," interposed the the lawyer, in professional expostulation,—"remember, you have no license to sell by public roup or auction."

"Seventeen hundred pounds sterling, Mr Loopy, for the superiority o' Auldbiggings—will ye gi'e me another bode?" was the Laird's reply; and rubbing his hands in ecstasy, he added, "Seventeen hundred pounds, once—seventeen hundred pounds, twice—going, Mr Loopy —going."

"I know all this is but a joke," rejoined the lawyer, "and to humour you—I'll go the length of eighteen hundred."

"And just for the joke too," said Mrs Soorooks. "I'll bid nineteen hundred, Mr Loopy."

"I think," cried Jock with a guffaw like a cataract, "that it's cheap at twa thoosan'."

"I'll give the money for it, Laird," growled the Nabob, "and end this foolish competition."

"Many a droll sight and sale have I seen," said Mr Loopy; "but never one like this.—Mr Rupees, are you in your senses?"

"If you are," was the emphatic answer.

The lawyer made no farther observations, but turning to the Laird, said, in an accent which could not be misunderstood—"Then I bid another hundred."

From that the contest lay between him and the Nabob, till their respective offers reached six-and-twenty hundred pounds.

"Going, once—going, twice!"—shouted the Laird.

"Another fifty," said Mrs Soorocks quietly, but slyly.

"We're all mad," said the lawyer.

"Twa thoosan' sax hun'er and fifty pounds sterling," said the Laird.—"Mak it guineas, Mr Loopy, and the bargain's yours."

"Guineas be't," exclaimed the Lawyer; and in the same moment, the Laird struck the table, and roared out, "Thrice."—The ladies all screamed and rushed upon him, while the Nabob made the house quake with his stump; but Jock, flourishing the flail in triumph, smashed a looking-glass into a hundred pieces, and fled.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

When order was restored, the lawyer took out his pocket-book, and drew from it a ready prepared minute of an agreement for the purchase, with a blank in it for the money. He then went to the mantlepiece, where an ink-stand with pens stood, and taking one of the pens, looked at it between him and the light, and afterwards touched it with the tip of his tongue.

"You are a noble hand at auctioneering, Laird," said he, as he spread the paper on the table. When he had filled up the blank, he laid it before the Laird, who, in taking the pen, turned and addressed his wife, "Isna this, dawty, a gran' hansell to our marriage?"

"Nawaubpore," said Mrs Soorocks, "ye hae lost a gude bargain."

The great man made her, however, no answer, but inquired, with more energy than the question required, if I thought the sale valid.

I excused myself from giving any opinion, by reminding him that I was no lawyer, upon which he wheeled abruptly, and without the courtesy of leave-taking, quitted the room; and the lawyer soon after, having finished his contract, also retired; and although I had come on purpose, I neglected to ask him to dinner as I had intended. Indeed, the sudden change which had thus taken place in the condition of the Laird, was so extraordinary, that it engrossed my whole mind; nor was the good fortune which so crowned his marriage confined that day to the successful sale of the barren superiority. Before the lawyer had left us many minutes, and while Mrs Soorocks was with indisputable justice lauding herself for the part she had played in the biddings, the arrival of Dr and Mrs Lounlans was announced.

The Laird's complexion changed at the name to the ashy paleness of fear and aversion.

"What's brought them here," cried he, "the cheatrie dominie! Is't no aneugh that he has

rookit my wife and my gude-sister out o' their father's heritage, but he maun come in triumphing chariots to trample us in the mire? It's a bonny pass the world's come to—the heiress of a house like Barenbraes, and the dochter o' a bauronet, to marry a dominie! No wonder that our auncient gentry are so fast weedit awa like cumberers o' the ground."

"Wheesht, wheesht, Laird," said Mrs Soorocks—"Harken—they're on the stair."

"I'll gar ding the door in their faces," exclaimed the indignant Malachi; but before he had time to put his threat in force, the Doctor entered, with his lady leaning on his arm.

The effect of this apparition—for, by its immediate impression, it may as such be described—was instantaneous. Miss Girzie sat with her hands elevated, and her elbows pressing against her sides. Mrs Mailings, with more self-possession, went forward to receive the strangers; Mrs Soorocks, who was seated beyond Miss Girzie, stretched forth her neck, and inspected the young lady with sharp and jealous eyes, her most peculiar and characteristic features; and the Laird sat twirling his thumbs, as if resolved

to take no heed whatever of his visitors. Every moment, however, he stole a glance at them; and in so doing, slackened his twirling, and then as often resumed it with redoubled vigour.—But the appearance of Mrs Lounlans was calculated to conciliate a kinder reception.

She was one of those unaffected and prepossessing young ladies, who, without any particular personal endowment, wear an air of so much good sense and natural gracefulness about them, as to attract confidence and esteem at the first sight. When she withdrew her arm from her husband's, and came forward to meet her aunt, Miss Girzie rose, and Mrs Soorocks put on a countenance of ineffable benignity.

Doctor Lounlans having introduced the ladies to one another, turned to the Laird, and said, "Our next friend here is Mr Mailings."

"They're a' friens that are na faes," was the answer; the sullen respondent endeavouring to sit erectly dignified, twirling his thumbs with accelerated velocity. Mrs Lounlans had evidently, however, been prepared for an uncouth reception; and being none dismayed by his ungracious mood and repulsive manner, lifted one

of his hands, and with much conciliation of accent, felicitated herself on being numbered among his relations.—" My mother too," she added, " whom we have set down at my aunt's —for we expected to have found them at home —was happy to hear of what has taken place, for she recollects you as one of her early friends."

The Laird was subdued by the gentleness of this address, and looked up with a smile, half indicative of pleasure and of incredulity, while Mrs Soorocks said to the Doctor,—

" And is't possible that Leddy Chandos has ta'en actual possession ?"—and she added with a significant sigh, " Oh, Miss Girzie !"

The Doctor replied, with more archness than belonged to his grave and habitual equanimity, " You know, Mrs Soorocks, that the estate is entailed, and that Lady Chandos is the elder sister." But observing that the sisters misunderstood him, he addressed himself to them, saying,—

" Her ladyship waits impatiently to see you. Tired with her journey, and deeply affected with the many tender reminiscences of youth and childhood, which every object in the scene of

the early pleasures has revived, she found herself unable to come with us."

By this time, Mrs Lounlans had so far ingratiated herself with the Laird, that he drew a chair towards his own, and requested her to sit down beside him.

"Dawty," said he to his wife, "I think she has a cast o' thee; but it will be late in the day before she'll can compare."

Mrs Soorocks here again addressed the Doctor, inquiring if Lady Chandos was come "to spend her auld days among her forefathers?"—adding, "but I needna be surprised at it, for she was aye a sweet sentimental lassie, a perfect Clarissy Harlowe, though I maun say, it's no verra like a heroine in a novel to come and take possession—'Deed, Miss Girzie, I feel for you. It's just like the cuckoo dabbing a wallydraigle out o' the nest; but I'll reason wi' her."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that head," replied the Doctor; "for to remove all anxiety from her sisters, she has settled the house and property on them during her life—She could do no more."

"But when she dies?" said the anxious and affectionate lady. The Doctor smiled, and then told her, that Mrs Lounlans had, before their marriage, confirmed and extended the settlement for her life also.

"Noo, that's Christianity, Doctor,"—and she justly commended the delicacy with which the settlement had been made, ascribing it all to his influence and advice.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Nabob, though a vain and ambitious, was by no means an unprincipled man, and when the identity of his ward was fully made out, he set himself seriously to render him all due restitution and fair play. The expense, however, in which he had unfortunately allowed himself to indulge since his return from the East, did not admit of his doing this with any comfort to himself, without unavoidably trenching on the comforts of the poor Laird. In a short time notice was conveyed to Malachi, in as delicate a manner as might be, that he must prepare, as speedily as possible, to leave the home of his ancestors.

Perhaps none of the human feelings are more extensive or powerful in their operation than local associations; for early remembrances of the fields wherein we roamed—the school wherein

we were tutored, and maybe flogged—the river wherein we bathed, waded, or fished—the cherry-trees whose unripe fruit we plundered—the "old familiar faces," that frequented parlour or hall—the dog which we were wont to caress—and the room wherein we slept, form in progress of time almost a part of our very existence, and find a chord that answers to their thrill, alike in the bosom of the cultivated and philosophic, as in the simple and untutored.

That to the Laird nature had not been prodigal of her intellectual favours, it were vain to deny; and that a long course of indulgence in the caprices, which his station permitted him to exercise, had blunted moral perceptions which never were particularly vivid, admits not of a doubt; yet even with his inveterate selfishness was occasionally mixed up a spice of the more ennobling ingredients of the human constitution. Though prepared by the storm which he had long felt brewing around him, for its some day, and that not far distant, breaking on his head, yet the tidings that he must leave Auldbiggings came to him like a sentence of death to the criminal, who through the investigation of his crimes

still perceives a loophole or two, by which the sunshine of mercy may possibly descend on his fated head.—But we must to action—and a truce to sentimentality, and "the influence of local attachment," which we leave in the competent hands of the Reverend Mr Polwhele.

The Laird and I were taking a saunter about his premises; and, observing the downcast, peevish melancholy of the old man, I lent in a word or two, by way of soothing encouragement.

"As Mrs Soorocks justly observed," said I—

"Hang Mrs Soorocks!" interrupted the Laird pettishly; "I dinna want to hear onything about her, or ony o' the like ten-fingered intermeddlers. What signifies a' that Mrs Soorocks has said or done, or can say or do, when I maun leave my auncient inheritance of Auldbiggings, and be driven out—an auld broken-doun man wi' grey hair—into a wicked warld, without kenning where I am to find a hame, or where, I should rather say, I am to look for a grave to lay my banes in—for that date will no be lang!"

"You take a black view of matters, Laird," said I, throwing as much cheerfulness into my

voice, as my really touched feelings would permit. "What signifies it, if we have a snug roof to cover us, where we lodge? We have no abiding-place here, Laird."

"Abiding-place here, or abiding-place there, hoo can ye deave me wi' sic havers, as trying to convince me, that ane shuldna have a regard for the place where they were born, and bred, and brought up! Do ye see that saugh-tree at the corner o' the avenue? I planted that fifty year ago wi' my ain hand; I dibbled the yearth, and stappit it in there, a thing no half as lang as this walking-staff; and now it towers ower our heads by a hunder feet, and the birds o' heevan bigg their nests amang its branches. I wadna touch that tree, come o't what wad—tho' it was to buy a coat to my back; but feint a hair will strangers ken or care about the like o' that; and it will maybe be sawn down next week, to gie the new-comers a veesy in that airt, towards that cursed Nawaubpore house o' theirs."

Trying to divert his mind from the train of feelings, which had taken possession of it with more than ordinary force, I asked him, "if he

intended that forenoon returning the visit of Dr and Mrs Lounlans."

"Deed wad I," answered he, "for I freely confess, he has behaved in a way I wad hae given him little credit for acting in towards Mrs Mailings and her sister. Yes, yes, I'll no be sae thrawn as to deny he's having been kinder to me and mine, than we had ony reason to expect; but woe's the day for Auldbiggings, and a puir pass has the like o' a house such as ours come to—which in its time has feasted half the lords and leddies in the land—when we are reduced to accept of a godsend from the like o' sic hands as those of auld Jock Lounlans' son, that I was ance obliged to roup out o' house and hall, for not having left the needful to pay his just and lawful debts."

"Oh, but, Laird," said I, glad of any way by which I might break in upon his heavy thoughts, "ye surely cannot be displeased with him for repaying evil with good?"

"Evil wi' good!" exclaimed the Laird, standing still, and looking me in the face, leaning forward on his staff as he propped his back with his left hand, "and have ye turned against

me in my hour of adversity like all the rest, or hoo come ye to affront an auld man like me in the very whirlpool o' my calamities. I dinna gie a curse for Dr Lounlans, as they ca' him—set him up wi' Doctor!—nor ony o' his kith, kin, or generation, bodies that wad have been glad of a nievefu' out o' my faither's kitchen meal-ark. But them that were glad to find a way into Auldbiggings by the back door lang ago, now venture proudly up its front steps in broad daylight, and ring our door bell, as if they had been born and bred gentlemen. But what are we standing palavering here for? Let us away into the house,—for it will no be lang that I'll hae a house, so to speak."

When we entered the lobby, the Laird took off his hat—the unique article of dress, already described—and as he hung it up on one of a range of wooden pins, the extremities of which were quaintly carved into something grotesquely resembling cats' faces, he seized hold of me by the sleeve, and said,—"Hech-how, for sixty year—ay, sixty year, and mair siller, I have hung up my hat on that dividual same pin. That was aye called my pin—naebody that kent

it wad hae been sae forrit-some and impudent as to have made use of that piece o' wood for their hats, kenning that I reserved it for my ain peculiar use. If, whan I cam in, I fand anither hinging there—let it have been headpiece o' gentle or semple, nae matter—I just scuffed it doun wi' the head o' my staff, and left Jock to lift it up at his leisure, as he liket. Naebody daured to have used such liberty in Jock's presence.—But ye'll stop and tak a check o' dinner with me, as it's now wearing on to dining hours?"

I endeavoured to make the best excuse I could, and pleaded an engagement at home.

"Deed and ye'll no stir a fit the day out o' this place, without tasting o' the hospitality o' Auldbiggings; I'll likely never can ask ye again, and though I'm pressing ye the day, it's maybe we'll no have ony great thing to offer ye."

Jock here appeared with a towel below his arm, threading a transverse passage. "Hollo, Jock, I say," cried the Laird, "can we gie a stranger his dinner wi' us the day?"

"Brawly," answered Jock, rubbing down

his towsy head with the flat of his hand; "that is a question to be after spearing, maister—no only this day, but ony day of the year, from June to Januar, I houp."

"I'm glad to hear't, Jock," said Auldbiggings, with a smile half natural and half sardonic, in which pride and regret seemed equally mingled; "have ye killed the auld bubbly-jock, as ye threatened this morning?"

"Killed him, ay, and wad have killed him an he had twenty lives, afore I wad have left him to gang snoitering away wi' his coulter, and his big umbrella of a tail, parading afore the window of ony stranger, that wad hae impudence eneuch to set fit within bounds, that have descended to us from of auld, and that are ours yet, stick and stane, by all the rules o' law and gospel."

"Aha, Jock," cried the Laird, acting the hero in his valet's presence, "right now-a-days is might, and 'tramp' is the word; we maun bow before our betters—our betters! the thing mostly sticks in my throat—but it's a' ae woo—'tramp's the word, Jock. But what for," added he, turning to me, "are we standing here,

condescending to hold a confab wi' a jackanapes of a servant? Haiste yere ways, Jock, but the house to the scullery, and get yere knives cleaned. We canna take them wi' us to sican a braw toun as Edinburgh, all spatted with red rust. But holt, Jock, look up to the clock in the stair, and tell me exactly what a clock it is."

Jock ran up a few steps, and, shading his eyes with his hand, answered, not without a scrutiny of the horologe, which showed he was not particularly an adept at noting the recorded flight of time,—"It wants, I think, maister, only nine minutes of three—nine, did I say? troth, I daursay it only wants seven."

The Laird had at the same instant drawn from his fob a massy structure of embossed gold, whose face, chequered with Saxon figuring, proclaimed it a work not of this age, but probably the descended heir-loom of some long deceased progenitor, which had come to the Laird in the regular line of inheritance. "Now isn't a curious thing," said he to me, "and Jock there can bear witness to the fact, that this watch has gane like a regulawter for thirty year, without ever needing a touch in

the handles? Nine minutes, did ye say, Jock? troth, wi' me it wants only seven. Where will ye find a piece of warkmanship like that now-a-days? But haiste yere-ways to the parlour, for Dawtie will be wondering we are sae lang in coming in from our pleasant out-o'-doors excursion."

On coming away early in the evening, as Jock was chaperoning me down stairs, he gave a sly look, first up to the clock, and then in my face. I perceived there was something in the creature's noddle, so, as he was handing me my hat in the lobby, I said to him, "Jock, yon is surely a capital old watch of your maister's. He tells me you wind it up for him regularly. Has it never gone wrong for thirty years?"

"Thirty years," said Jock, with a loud guffaw, as he gave his hand a slap on his thigh—"Thirty year! say ye? that beats cock-feighting; the auld turnip wadna gang thirty hours without losing a quarter, less or mair. But I aye tak it out cannily frae aneath his head every morning, and set it to a moment. I wish ye a good night, sir; tak care o' your feet on the outer staps."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Perhaps if the faithful Jock had heard repeated the thousand-and-one appellations of his Majesty of the Celestial Empire, he might have been for a moment disturbed in the calm assurance of those thoughts, which reposed in his master, as indisputably the greatest of mankind; but certainly none other could have had the smallest chance in the competitorship, as we before have taken occasion to observe. Jock's ideas of terrestrial pomp, pride, and ambition, were grievously hampered in within the bounds of his native parish, in which the family of Auldbiggings, as he had heard his father and his grandfather asseverate, were in the old times a sort of petty despots in their day, "ruling the country from Dan to Beersheba," as Jock expressed it, "like a wheen Solomons, and suf-

fering for the cause, sword in hand, in the bluidy days of the martyrs."

It was very evident, however, now, that change of times had brought change of circumstances; and that the baronial power of Auldbiggings was so circumscribed, as to deny of its extending any protecting banner over the last of its adherents.

As I pondered on this, the thought of what was to become of poor Jock pressed on my mind; for the state of the Laird's circumstances rendered the possibility of Jock's transference with him to Edinburgh a matter wholly out of the question. I spoke of this to Mrs Soorocks, and begged her opinion as to the best political move for the faithful creature during the present distressing crisis.

" Silly body," said Mrs Soorocks, " what earthly thing is he good for, or capable of? He has been so long accustomed to his ain jog-trot, that it's a matter o' moonshine to him how the world wags, provided he be able to keep himsell snug and easy. As to recommending him to a flunky's place in Renthrew, Greenock, or Glasgow, or to mount guard wi' the spicy mush-

room-bonnetted heathens of Nawaubpore, is totally and entirely out of the question. I wish the poor cratur mayna dee in a ditch yet; for, like the auld rebel Jacobeets, he has stucken ower lang to a falling house; or the best that can come o't, is his landing on the parish, or begging his way (for Jock is weel liket) frae door to door through the world."

"Could the man not find a remedy in matrimony like his master, Mrs Sorrocks? It is a miserable thing to see the poor fellow cast on society utterly destitute. He is a feasible enough looking dog, and I dare say some widow's comfortable open door may be found for him."

"Weel," replied the lady, "isn't it strange that a body hasna at all times their wits about them? Ye have just hit the nail on the head. Bless me! and did such a thing never enter into my stupid head?—Cast him on the world when we have such a market for disposing of him!—I really canna see yet how you and me have overlookit this business till this time o' day. Widow, did ye say? Na, there is nae need of his ganging even that length, by way of sacrifeese. There's Jenny Clatterpans, that has had a lang snug

time o't, and has a pose in her kist-nook, or I'm a mistaken woman. She'll be out o' place, too; and I doutna will grup like a drowning creature at ony comfortable down-sitting. I'll have her sent for this very blessed afternoon,—for there's no time to be lost; and I daur to say, that Jenny has mair gude sense than stand in the way of such a godsend of good fortune."

"Well, Mrs Soorocks," said I, "I leave the matter in your excellent hands, and have the strongest hopes that you will be able to bring the business to a speedy bearing; for, when Mrs Mailings is gone, I am afraid Jock's slender funds would speedily show themselves "like the morning dew, that soon vanisheth away."

Mrs Soorocks was not worse than her word, for the mercurial activity of the lady's constitution seemed expressly to have been given her, to counterbalance and remedy the listlessness of more saturnine neighbours;—the same call, which served as a parting one to the Laird and his lady, being appropriated at its conclusion to brightening up the promises and prospects of Jock's future life. Contrary, however, to expectation, Jenny at first rode refractory, and re-

sented her being evened to Jock as a high insult; but, calming down before the strong and subtle reasoning of Mrs Soorocks, she began at length to view the matter in another aspect.

"Weel, weel," said Jenny, as Mrs Soorocks afterwards told me, "what is ordeened for ane will never gang past them; but onybody that wad, ance in a day, have telled me that our man Jock and me was to be buckled thegither, I should hae thocht had nae ither intention than of making a fule o' me. But, for a' that, I'm no denying that he is a good-natured soul; and, in gude keeping, might through time come to be a civileezed creature. A brokener ship nor that has come to land."

Not long after parting with Mrs Soorocks, on that same day, I encountered Jock on the road, with a band-box in his hand, containing probably some article of female finery, for which, as he told me unsolicited, his mistress had sent him in to Renfrew. On questioning him on his future prospects, and what he intended doing after leaving the Laird's service, he informed me, "that he was just thinking of taking a stap ower bye to me, to see if I kent ony gentle-

man or nobleman in the neibourhood in need of an active steady butler, for he wasna fond o' travelling far frae hame; and a place o' the kind of the Laird's getting for him in Embrough, might lead him gude kens where—maybe up to Lonon, which he had nae brew o'."

I could not help smiling both at the humility of Jock's choice, and the confidence he seemed to express of the Laird's interest being able to procure for him any settlement of this sort; but one minute's attention to the tones of Jock's voice, and a single glance at the poor fellow's uncouth and undrawing-room-like gestures, carried manifest testimony with them of the absurdity of such a proposition.

"Upon my word, Jock," said I, "it strikes me, that from the experience you have had in the world in the capacity of fac-totum to the Laird, you are well entitled to shy for evermore the trammels of servantship, and commence head of a house on your own account."

"Me the head of a house!" cried Jock; "Na, na, that will never sowther. I'm neither able in the capacity of purse or person for ony such upsetting, to say naething aboot being ye-

dicated; but I can baith read and vrite, for a' that."

"I'm sure, Jock, you have long had a sweetheart somewhere or other, that is the apple of your eye, and whom you long to make the wife of your bosom? It is nonsense denying the fact."

"As sure as death," said Jock, with his utmost attempt at gravity and earnestness, "I never had ony sweethearts in my life—deil a yane—except a bit wench, Matty Primrose, that gied me the slip whan I least expected it, and followed a dragoon regiment that lay in Hamilton. She gaed away to the wars wi' her gudeman, and, doubtless, baith him and her are doun amang the dead men lang ago."

"I've heard, Jock, that Leezie and you have been drawing up of late—Is that true?"

"Whae? Leezy, Mrs Soorock's maid! No a word o' truth in't, as I'm a leeving sinner. Na, na, she's ower young for the like o' me. I wad like a canny an' sedatt housekeeper. I wadna tak Leezie."

"Well, Jock, perhaps Leezie has other fish to fry; but I'm sure you can have no earthly

objections to Jenny Clatterpans? If you and she were to come together, you would just find yourself as much at home as at Auldbiggings. How long have you been in the house together?"

"Let me see," answered Jock. "Jenny— let me see, has been aboot us, ae way and anither, aboot aughteen year. She was a gude while the errand lassie, but I spoke to the Laird to promote her to the charge of the kail-pat. Jenny and me aye gree very weel, but it wad be condescending in the like o' me to have onything to say to the like o' her—me that's been upper servant at The Place, ever sin' I was the height o' yere walking-stick. But I'll do whatever's thocht best; I'm no doure in the constitution, like some fo'k."

"Perfectly right, Jock. If I were in your place, I would at once see what could be done. Maybe, if you are not good at the courting, we may get somebody to help you a bit."

"I'll be obleeged to ye; but really, as I maistly never tried, there's nae saying hoo I might come on,—'faint heart never wan fair leddy,' as the spaewife ance vrote doun to me,

when the leeing fief tell't me I wad hae three wives."

I could not help smiling at Jock's earnestness, as he deprecated the latitude to which the tether of the fortune-teller allowed him to range; and, as he added,—

"But, for a' that, I daur say your advice is holesome—Jenny 'll be packing up bag and baggage immediately, to gang away as soon as the Laird and his Leddy take the mail coach, to her native, somewhere awa doun aboot Paisley. She's weel connectit, as I've heard her say mysell; and, though its stooping doun, I maun confess, for the like o' me to lift up sae little as her, yet folk are obligated to bow their back to the times, and it's a great chance but my lottery-ticket may come out a blank."

"Keep up your heart, Jock," I said to him; "but whenever you get home, see what you can make of Jenny."

"I'll do that, sir; but it's time for me to be moving, for, if I dinna jealouse wrang, Geordie Joug, o' the Tanker and Tappit-Hen public, has a sheep's-ee after her; but I daursay she wad never be siccan a fule as pit the

like o' me and Geordie Joug, wi' his ringle-ee, into a balance."

As Jock moved on with his paviour-like steps and uncouth habiliments, "whistling as he went for want of thought," his hat turned up behind, and the band-box of his mistress suspended from his left hand by a blue ribbon, I could not help more than once turning to look after him on the road, as I thought to myself, "There goes a veritable picture of Adonis,—the beau-ideal of a lover."

CHAPTER XL.

Little remains to be added to this brief domestic tale, which we now hurry on to its conclusion, premising, however, that the united eloquence of Jock and his able advocate Mrs Soorocks, eventually succeeded wonderfully with Jenny Clatterpans; and after being three times regularly proclaimed in church—an acquiescence with propriety and church-laws, which was more than his Laird and Leddy could boast of—Dr Lounlans joined them together as man and wife. To such as are interested in their welfare, we have the felicity of saying, that, assisted by Jenny, who is of a managing turn, Jock is now in a thriving way, their united funds having been sufficient to buy a cow or two, and a myriad of cocks and hens—the produce of which in the shape of milk, eggs,

butter, chickens, and cheese, enables them to enjoy all the necessaries, and a few of the luxuries of life. To add to their connubial bliss, we have the greatest satisfaction in adding, that Jenny has lately presented Jock with a fine boy, the very image of his father.

Stimulated by disappointment, yet under the pretext of doing justice to his ward, the Nabob prosecuted with ardour the claim which he had on the lands of Auldbiggings, till the old Laird, like a bird hovering round its desolated nest, and loath to take his leave, fairly finding himself driven to his wit's-end, and unable longer to retain possession, abandoned the home which for many a generation had been the pride and sanctuary of his ancestors, and moved with his Leddy and her sister to Edinburgh. By the purchase-money of the superiority, together with the income and gatherings of the two ladies, he is enabled to live in great comparative respectability; yet he is said to have been at first much annoyed at finding himself only one of an immense crowd, thoughtless of him and busy with their own concerns, instead of the west country

Laird, "the admired of all admirers," and the sovereign of his own petty domain.

Regularly, whenever the season is over, the Laird and his Leddy revisit Barenbraes, reducing their establishment, and haining for the winter; for, like the other Athenian gentry, they make a point of returning to town when the Courts open. The Laird still talks of publishing his Memoirs, though we have not lately had opportunity of learning what progress he is making in that elaborate, curious, and erudite work, consistency having obliged him to cancel some parts, and remodel others, on account of his alteration of opinion, having become a strenuous advocate for free trade in corn, since he ceased to be interested in the fluctuations of agriculture. When the weather is calm and fair, he is sometimes met with in Prince's Street, with one of the ladies on each arm. They seem particularly fond of the windows of the picture shops, opposite which they may be frequently observed pausing; nor do they disdain taking a view of the "Hydras, Gorgons, and Chimæras dire," plastered up in front of the menageries on the Mound, when the newspapers announce any fresh im-

portation of natural curiosities. In general, however, he prefers to sit at home, watching the mutations of the clouds from his window, or the shapes of Saracens, and salamanders in the fire. In this pensive guise and solitary occupation, he is allowed to spend many an unmolested hour; for the ladies are great forenoon visitors, talking much of their sister Lady Chandos, and but rarely alluding to their niece Mrs Lounlans, of whom, when they do chance to make mention, one of them makes a point of sighing, as it were to indicate how much they feel for her imprudence in having marred their pedigree by marrying so far below her own station.

We had almost overlooked the amiable dominie, Mr Tansie—so fares it often with unobtrusive merit in this busy and bustling world—but the reader may not find it unpleasant to be told, that, with the equanimity of one of Plato's disciples, he keeps the silent tenor of his way, "teaching the young idea how to shoot" for his livelihood, contented with a situation whose privacy enables him to indulge in his philosophical day-dreams, with but few wants to supply, and having these amply satisfied.

A pleasant time for him is it during his Christmas vacation—the season of long starry nights, and wintry devastation—to pay his annual visit to the metropolis, when he never fails, as in duty bound, to pay his respects to the Laird, and the Ladies; constantly carrying with him, from the faithful Jock to his master, some little token of his grateful remembrance, in the shape of a seasonable goose, or a pair of well-fed ducks, in the corner of his portmanteau.

I was much pleased with Mr Tansie's description of the Laird's town residence, and the remarks to which it gave rise in his unsophisticated mind.

"They dwell," said he, "in a fine double house, with two entrances. One opens to a common-stair that leads to the upper flat and attics, which certain of the lower orders inhabit. The other is a genteel door with pillars and architraves, such as befit the porch of a house for a family of rank and pedigree.

"You cannot go amiss in looking for the house, for it has a brass plate on the door, with 'Malachi Mailings, Esq. of Auldbiggings,' on't at full length; the which to observe caused me

much perplexity, for I could not divine what the Laird had to do with a sign. That doctors, advocates, and writers to the signet, should have recourse to such brazen devices to make themselves notorious, and to bring custom, seems not unreasonable; but for landless lairds, and freeholders of parchment, to set themselves up as a titular nobility, and expect fame and renown by inscribing their teetles as they call them, on brass, is, to say the least o't, not the way that Horace took to raise himself a monument; but I daresay it is done by the quondam Laird, our friend, in a spirit of bravery, for I was told that he still refuses to sign or assent to any legal surrender of Auldbiggings to the Nabob, though he may be brought to trouble for his contumacity."

FINIS.

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